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ISSUE
429

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STARBURST

OCTOBER 2016

**ISSUE
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Starburst is printed in the UK by BUXTON PRESS LIMITED
Palace Road, Buxton, Derbyshire, SK17 6AE

Distributed by Marketforce (UK) Ltd, 2nd Floor, 5 Churchill Place, Canary Wharf, London, E14 5HU.
Tel: 020 3148 3300 - Fax: 020 3148 8105 - Web: marketforce.co.uk

EDITORIAL

Welcome to STARBURST Issue 429!

Doctor Strange was synonymous with my puberty. I realise that is a fairly bizarre way to open an Editorial, but it is true nonetheless.

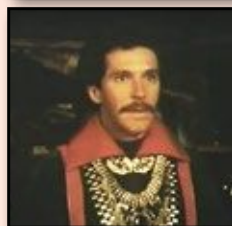
I grew up reading **DC** and **Marvel**. Their creations were part of the tapestry of my childhood, and yet two characters always seemed difficult to fully comprehend. The artwork was fantastic but the stories that these two characters were involved in always seemed a bit deep.

Those characters were the **Silver Surfer** and **Doctor Strange**. Their adventures, and their worlds seemed so much more difficult to casually read. You couldn't just breeze by a few pages of Manhattan getting wrecked by a scrap with a supervillain, you had to actually concentrate. However, once I got older, man was I glad I kept those back issues!

Doctor Strange, in particular, opened up the Marvel Universe in ways that possibly only the **Fantastic Four** and their adventures off planet or in the Negative Zone could deliver. Even then, the FF were still pretty pedestrian when compared to some of the spiritual and psychic wars constantly raging on around us. Wars that were fought by the good Doctor on our behalf, while we remained oblivious. The Ditko original and the subsequent issues pencilled by one of my favourite artists, the incredible Gene Colan, stand up even today. They were head trips, pure and simple. The artwork, coupled with the complexities of the issues, made them perfect fodder for curious university students. For this was a time when comics had started to be appreciated by a more mature audience, one that would visit with the good Doctor for a few hours, with cannabis usually prescribed for good measure.



Although casually following **Doctor Strange**, it was not until 1978 that he really grabbed my attention, and I finally decided to revisit what had gone over my head as a young child. Firstly, the **Marvel Treasury Editions** that were circulating in the mid to late '70s had featured the Doc in issue 6. Happily, my Grandma found an old copy in a newsagents. These treasury editions were enormous, oversized colour reprints, at a time when Marvel UK were strictly black and white.



I remember sitting engrossed for hours, and then my head exploding when I discovered that once upon a time he had changed his look and turned blue and bald. Blimey, you were lucky if the other Marvel heroes had a brief costume change! Then I found out that there was a movie version of **Doctor Strange** on TV later that week.

It was on really late, but my Grandma let me stay up to watch it as we were away in Morecambe - it turned out to be the highlight of the holiday. The 1978 TV movie of **Doctor Strange** is a film I will defend to this day. It had been put on late as it was actually pretty weird. John Mills was superb as the Ancient One, and I didn't mind one bit that Doctor Strange looked like a porn star. It had a vibe and an atmosphere that mirrored the feel of those early comic books. Even his house had THAT window. At a time when Spider-Man was running around in pyjamas, this was really impressive to me. No drug dealers, bent lawyers, or greedy landlords here - Morgana Le Fay stepped up to the plate. An actual friggin' supervillain. Even now after **Marvel Studios** have redefined what to expect from comics on the big screen, **Doctor Strange** (1978) is still worth a watch. Sadly, my hopes for weekly adventures were swiftly dashed, and the movie merely banished to occasional late night reruns.

As happy as I am that **Marvel Studios** has decided to attempt a modern take on the character, I must admit that I am nervous whether the public are finally ready to accept a central character

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whose adventures can be quite cerebral in form. I have my fingers crossed for him, but at least, finally, I got to put that other famous Doctor on the cover during my tenure as Editor.

Also in this issue, we cover some of the highlights of last month's **STARBURST International Film Festival**. The event that you all helped make a big success. The entire team here are extremely grateful, and if you could not make it, there is always next year!

We also have a plethora of previews (that's easy for me to say!). We look forward to **Westworld**, **Trolls** and upcoming seasons of **The Walking Dead**, **Scream Queens**, and **Star Wars Rebels**.

I also give some background on the Festival in **It's Only A Movie**, and we have all of your regular columns and contributors (well, those that survived the festival in one piece!).

By the hoary hosts of Hoggoth, what a huge issue this is!

Until next time,
keep watching the weird and wonderful,



Jordan Royce
Jordan Royce
EDITOR



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FEEDBACK

You can write to STARBURST via snail mail:
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or email: letters@starburstmagazine.com

NUTS ABOUT THUNDERBOLTS

Absolutely love your magazine! The **SUICIDE SQUAD** feature was awesome and I can't wait to see this movie. The DC Cinematic Universe is definitely expanding and **SUICIDE SQUAD** teases at that by showing a cameo of Batman. When I used to read comic books, I remember Marvel's **THUNDERBOLTS**. It's just a matter of time when there will be a **THUNDERBOLTS** movie! Superhero movies are so

fascinating to watch, because CGI (Computer Graphic Imaging) makes anything possible.

Paul Dale Roberts,
HPI's *Esoteric Detective,*
Halo Paranormal
Investigations,
916 203 7503

We will certainly be covering THUNDERBOLTS much more when that time occurs!

You are right, CGI is amazing and it advances so

STAR

HOLO AGAIN

This is going to be a long one... So before reading I advise you to stick the kettle on, make yourself comfy... here we go!

So many reasons I was excited to open up the new **STARBURST** issue! Finding out I had a letter printed in a magazine was quite simply the coolest! I buy the print version as I'm old school! Reading the Editors letter and seeing that Jordan would visit The Ritz Cinema in Stockport! I'm from and living there and was again so excited and the fact so much **STAR TREK** goodness!!!

In response to my letter, yes I do indeed read it cover to cover every issue I buy it, set myself an evening to read it all! You asked for my opinion on **SUICIDE SQUAD** and so here it is I **LOVED** it! I have seen it a few times and each time I find things I love about it! The attached photo will show you just a little of my love for it! It was long overdue a comic book movie be fun and not as serious! Like Jack Bottomley I expected little from it but boy did the film pass all expectations!

Now on to **STAR TREK**! The article *Let's Talk About Holodecks* was like my Birthday and Christmas all at once. As a child (and even now) I used to sit and wonder what I would create on one and so this article was perfect for me.



So many other amazing things to mention about the issue. So I will just say this: Keep up the amazing work I and many others can not thank you enough. Also thank you so much for printing my letter it may have not been much but to me it meant a lot! Thank you!

Owen Davies, via EMAIL

P.S: Also I would love a tour of the office ha-ha! I can't even begin to imagine just how amazing it is!

Ooh you're back, just like a Boomerang! Nice to hear from you again Owen!

So, you mention you always dreamed of going on a Holodeck, but you never said what Hologram you would use... oh... is it unprintable?! No, I'm guessing you would have a Hologram of the Enterprise? Can we come? ALL ABOARD!

LETTER

much with every year that passes. It's all well and good, as long as it isn't overused and kids (and grown ups!) are still reading comics and using their imaginations too!

NEWS TO ME

Hi **STARBURST**ers, Loving the mag, but hard to find. It's a bit long though, makes it hard to read in Smiths. (I joke, I joke.)

Any love for **STRANGER THINGS** over in Manchester? Saw the whole series recently, and the only thing that would have made it more '80s would be a copy of **STARBURST** Magazine.

Your *Anime-Nation* column mentioned that *Hunter X Hunter* is cancelled again. Surely this is not news? It's always being cancelled!

I was surprised to read in your *Brave New Words* section that Anne Rice is still alive. Seriously, vampires in Atlantis? Liking the book news, even if your book guy is really just a pound shop David Langford.

Why doesn't *Audiostatic* ever cover podcasts? Why does *Retro Bytes* have interviews with MMA fighters? Why do we never see Funko Pops in *Wattos*?

Later Gators,
Ste W, via EMAIL

In the past we have considered covering podcasts in our Audio section but we realised we have the best Podcasts in the Universe anyway, we don't need to tell you about any others!

Pops are cool but we often try to show merchandise that not everyone may know about.

TOP 50 STAR TREK EPISODES

I just wanted to say many thanks for the *Star Letter* winner last issue and an excellent issue it was, the only thing missing is the best 50 episodes of STAR TREK.

STAR TREK -

Tomorrow Is Yesterday
Space Seed
City On The Edge Of Forever
Mirror, Mirror
Patterns Of Force
Assignment: Earth

STAR TREK THE NEXT GENERATION -

Yesterdays Enterprise
The Best Of Both Worlds
Times Arrow
Timescape
All Good Things

STAR TREK DEEP SPACE NINE -

Emissary
The Way Of The Warrior
The Visitor
Little Green Men
Trials and Tribble-ations

For The Uniform
Children Of Time
Empok Nor
Call To Arms
The Magnificent Ferengi
Far Beyond The Stars
One Little Ship
In The Pale Moonlight
Badda-Bing Badda-Bang
What You Leave Behind

STAR TREK VOYAGER -

Eye Of The Needle
The 37's
Deadlock
Future's End
Scorpion
Year of Hell
The Killing Game
Living Witness
Timeless
Bride Of Chaotica
Relativity
Equinox
Dragon's Teeth
Blink Of An Eye
Endgame

STAR TREK ENTERPRISE -

Broken Bow
Carbon Creek
Dead Stop
Regeneration
The Expanse
Similitude
Azati Prime
Storm Front
In A Mirror, Darkly

If there are any new fans that have Netflix these are the ones to watch.

Also I really enjoyed STAR



"You don't mind if I smoke do you?"

Winner: Monica Walsh. Head over to www.starburstmagazine.com to enter this month's caption contest.

TREK BEYOND, it is one of the better TREK films.

I have only been to two conventions: I went to Las Vegas in 2010 and somewhere in Peterborough in 2012, I'm planning to go to *The Exhibition* and *Destination Europe* in October, it should be good!

Martin Revitt, via EMAIL

Thank you for your top 50 episodes, but we think you have been crafty and cheated a bit, we notice quite a few of the two-parter episodes classed as one!

wWe think if STARBURST put together our own list it would have to be voted upon by all of our writers. It's so tough with so many amazing episodes!

As you say Martin, STAR TREK is so easy to find on Netflix, Horror Channel, or DVDs nowadays, we would recommend people who are new to TREK just choose a series and go from the start! No one could regret that!

Great photo with cast members from STAR TREK: VOYAGER! We are jealous!

STARBURST

NEXT ISSUE: 430 ON SALE FROM OCTOBER 21ST

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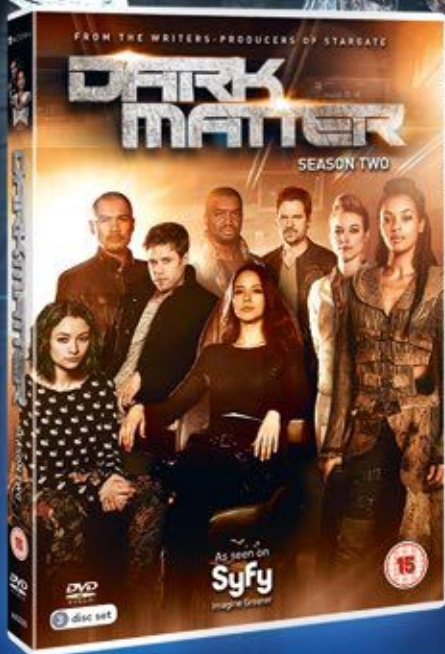
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AUGUST 26TH- 28TH 2016

PHOTO REVIEW



Doug Naylor



Jason Figgis & Darren Travers



Naqqash Khalid



Der Skinn, Thomas Morelli & Mike Royce



Christian Nicolson

It was the bash of the year over at the MMU Union Building in Manchester on August Bank Holiday weekend, with fans, special guests, and filmmakers arrived from all over the world to celebrate cult entertainment in all its forms with STARBURST.

If you were there, you know how fantastic it was, if you missed out, here's a sample of just some of the amazing things that happened over the three days. Rest assured, we're already looking forward to doing it again next year so let this gallery of images serve as a taster of what you can expect next August...



The STARBURST Fantasy Awards 2016

Sponsored by **horrorchannel**

Hotly contested, the winners this year were:

Best Performance:
Darren Travers (**Don't You Recognise Me?**)

Young Filmmaker Award:
Naqqash Khalid (**Parts**, short film)

Best Short:
Amor Fati (director: Thomas Morelli)

Best Feature:
Good Tidings (director: Stuart W. Bedford)

Independents Day Award:
Christian Nicolson (**This Giant Papier Mache Boulder is Actually Really Heavy**)

Hall of Fame Award:
Doug Naylor (co-creator of **Red Dwarf**)



Good Tidings



The Guest List

We were delighted to welcome many fantastic stars from in front and behind the screens.

John Glen - director of five James Bond films, and worked on many more.

Peter Lamont - production designer of dozens of James Bond films, as well as **Aliens** and **Titanic**.

Doug Naylor - co-creator of **Red Dwarf**.

Steve Pemberton - member of **The League of Gentlemen**, co-creator and star of **Inside No. 9**.

Virginia Hey - star of **Mad Max 2** and **Farscape**.

Caroline Munro - star of **The Golden Voyage of Sinbad** and **Captain Kronos**, **Vampire Hunter**.

Martine Beswick - star of **Dr Jekyll and Sister Hyde** and **Thunderball**.

Katy Manning - star of **Doctor Who**.

Peter Beale - former Managing Director of Fox UK Productions.

David Graham - the voice of Parker, Brains, and Gordon Tracy in **Thunderbirds**.

The Ray Harryhausen Trust - John Walsh and Connor Heaney.

Laurence R. Harvey - star of two of the **Human Centipede** films, as well as **Frankenstein Created Bikers** and **The Editor**.

Toby Whithouse - creator of **Being Human** and **Doctor Who** writer.

John Wagner - co-creator of Judge Dredd.

Bob Baker - writer for **Wallace and Gromit**, '70s TV show **Sky**, as well as creating K9 for **Doctor Who**.

Graeme Harper - director of **Doctor Who** and **Inside No. 9**.

Stephen Le Rivière - producer of **Thunderbirds 1965**.

Adam Tandy - producer of **Inside No. 9**.

Stephen Volk - author and writer of the classic TV show **Ghostwatch**.

Phil Collinson - **Doctor Who** producer.

FutureShock Wrestling - fantastic independent promotion for grapple fans.

Philip Martin - writer for **Doctor Who**, as well many gritty TV series.

Philip Morris - famed archive hunter.

Tanya Roberts/Clare Forrest/Shah Nazir/Greg Watts - comic book artists and writers.

Guest interviewers: Marcus Hearn/Justin Johnson/Edward Russell/Dick Fiddy.





The Movies

Frankenstein Created Bikers - directed by James Bickert.
Mad Max 2 (1981) - directed by George Miller.
The Lighthouse - directed by Chris Crow.
Good Tidings - directed by Stuart W. Bedford.
Psychomania (1973) - directed by Don Sharp.
This Giant Papier Mache Boulder is Actually Really Heavy - directed by Christian Nicolson.
Pandorica - director by Tom Paton.
Gothic (1986) - directed by Ken Russell.
Dracula A.D. 1972 (1972) - Directed by Alan Gibson.
Dr Jekyll and Sister Hyde (1971) - directed by Roy Ward Baker.
Legend of Black Diamond - directed by Graeme Campbell.
The Golden Voyage of Sinbad (1973) - directed by Gordon Hessler.
The Rocketeer (1991) - directed by Joe Johnston.
A Hitch in Time (1978) Director: Jan Darnley-Smith.
The Glitterball (1977) directed by Harley Cokeliss.
The Wrong Trousers (1993) - directed by Nick Park.
Galaxy Quest (1999) - directed by Dean Parisot.
Vampire Resurrection - directed by Mark Morris.
Dredd (2012) - directed by Pete Travis.
Mania - directed by Jessica Cameron.
Blood of the Tribades - directed by Michael J. Epstein and Sophia Cacciola.
Horizon (web series) - directed by Paul Dudbridge.
Smile Again, Jenny Lee - directed by Carlo Caldana.
Aliens (1986) - directed by James Cameron.
Licence to Kill (1989) - directed by John Glen.
Don't You Recognise Me? - directed by Jason Figgis.
Peelers - directed by Sevé Schelenz.
Banjo - Directed by Liam Regan.

Short Films

Poltergeist - directed by David Gilbank.
Tossing Myself Off - directed by Leon David Williams.
The Speed of Life - directed by James Nicholls.
Gilt - directed by Jules Stevens.
Dead Town Parts One and Two - directed by Peter McKeirnon.
Desolation - directed by Martin Sonntag.
Amor Fati - directed by Thomas Morelli.
Peace, Love, Unity, Revolution - directed by Marcus Kempton.
Tok - directed by Jason Davison.
Dark Laugh - directed by Michael J. McCarthy.
Hedge - directed by Jenny Longworth.
The Werewolf's Greatest Hit - directed by Jim and Nick Zounis.
Death To Life - directed by Roger Bell.
Puzzle Piece - directed by Christina Avaglinano.
Parts - directed by Naqqash Khalid.
The Railway Carriage - directed by Ross Adgar.
Rats - directed by Mark Logan.
Innsmouth - directed by Izzy Lee.
Something to Save You - directed by Vis Vitalis.
Erika's End - directed by Sonia Escolano.
I Dare You - directed by Eli Klein.
Last Man on Earth - directed by Darren Langlands.
Broadcast Signal Intrusion - directed by Paul Drinkwater and Tim Woodall.
Have You Seen Sarah? - directed by Chadwick Kirby.
Silently Within Your Shadow - directed by Scott Lyus.
Zombie Playground: Ice Scream - directed by Jason Wright.
Vardøger - directed by Ludovic De Gaillande.
The Stylist - directed by Jill Gevorgian.

Keep watching starburstfilmfest.co.uk and [@starburstff](https://twitter.com/starburstff) for updates and announcements for next year's festival.

Photo credits: Robert Martin, Peter Gibson, Kristian Williams, Martin Unsworth, Plentiful Pictures & Photography, Laura Binnie & Zoe Badder.





THINGS TO COME

A ROUND-UP OF THE
BEST (AND WORST)
OF THIS MONTH'S
MOVIE / TV NEWS



DC

Warner Brothers' DCEU has certainly gotten off to a rocky start, but one thing that we can all agree on is that Ben Affleck's Batman was pretty damn impressive. As such, many are eagerly awaiting the upcoming Affleck-helmed solo movie for this latest incarnation of the Caped Crusader, and now comes word on who'll be causing some major headaches for the World's Greatest Detective when the film hits the big screen. Affleck himself took to his social media channels to reveal that the 'big bad' of the currently-untitled Batman movie (tentatively called **The Batman**) will be Slade Wilson, aka Deathstroke. In fact, the actor/writer/director actually posted a brief video of *someone* dressed as Deathstroke on a set *somewhere*. Given how Zack Snyder's **Justice League** is currently shooting, it could well be that the rogue will have a small role in Snyder's superhero team-up effort before he takes centre stage in the Dark Knight's solo outing. A master assassin and mercenary, Deathstroke has been a huge favourite of many a comic book fan since first debuting as a Teen Titans villain. From there, he's become a longtime foe of Nightwing, Batman, and Green Arrow. In recent times, Manu Bennett has portrayed the villain in The CW's **Arrow**, delivering a character that many fans hold up as one of the very best live-action depictions of a comic book villain to date, particularly in how Slade's relationship with Stephen Amell's Oliver Queen played out over the show's first two seasons. At this early stage, there's no word on who'll be playing Deathstroke in the DCEU. The solo Batman movie, which Affleck is co-writing with the legendary Geoff Johns, has yet to be given a confirmed release date, although Warner Brothers have release dates of October 5th, 2018 and November 1st, 2019 reserved for two unnamed DC projects. Before that, Affleck's Bats will next be seen in **Justice League** when that hits cinemas in November 2017.

One other hero who will, of course, be a huge part of **Justice League** is Henry Cavill's Superman. Where the Big Blue Boy Scout is concerned, recent pictures have surfaced online to suggest that Cavill's Supes will return with a new black outfit for at least part of the film. This would tie-in with the famed **Death of Superman** comic book arc, which saw the Last Son of Krypton return with a new black costume following his 'death' after battling Doomsday. But that's not the only Superman news this month, for Warner Brothers is believed to be working on a **Man of Steel 2** once more. WB previously made the move to announce **Man of Steel 2** before Zack Snyder's **Man of Steel** had even been released. When the 2013 Supes movie didn't reach the box office heights that Warners had hoped for, the decision was made to bring a certain Caped Crusader in to save the

day, promptly turning **Man of Steel 2** into **Batman v Superman**.

Despite WB previously announcing a DC movie slate that included solo films for the likes of Wonder Woman, Aquaman, The Flash, and even the dull-as-dishwater Cyborg, not to mention a Green Lantern Corps film, plus rumours of movies for the likes of Booster Gold and Black Canary, there was an ominous Superman-shaped hole in the schedule. Given those October 2018 and November 2019 release dates for unconfirmed DC movies, it could well be that Cavill's Kal-El may snare one of those slots should **Man of Steel 2** finally come to be. Although Zack Snyder having a further influence in the DCEU is a turn-off to many - currently it's believed that Snyder would return for any **Man of Steel** sequel - the fact that Geoff Johns is now overseeing all of Warner Brothers' DC movies should give long-suffering fans hope that the DCEU may finally get Superman right following the poor portrayals of comic books' brightest shining light in both **Man of Steel** and **Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice**.

The first superhero out of the gates following **Justice League** will be Ezra Miller's Barry Allen, with the Rick Famuyiwa-helmed **The Flash** arriving in early 2018. And it looks as if the Scarlet Speedster will not be alone, for it's now been revealed that Ray Fisher's Cyborg will be a part of the film. It's not known at this stage just how big a role Cyborg will have to play in the movie, but this is certainly a smart move from WB. Given how Cyborg is the one member of the cinematic Justice League who casual moviegoers are least familiar with, it makes sense to give Victor Stone plenty of screen time before he gets his own movie in 2020. Fisher's Cyborg was briefly glimpsed in this year's **Batman v Superman: Dawn of Justice**, and he'll next be seen as part of Zack Snyder's **Justice League** late next year. Sticking him in **The Flash** will sensibly give audiences a chance to see him in action again before he headlines his own film. In the comic book realm, Vic Stone was a star athlete before a tragic accident ultimately resulted in him winding up as part man, part machine. Initially a member of the Teen Titans, Cyborg would eventually end up as a fully-fledged, card-carrying member of the Justice League. To us, though, and to many comic book fans, the character is one of the dullest and most boring heroes on the DC roster. Either way, Cyborg will be present when **The Flash** speeds to screens on March 3rd, 2018.

Taking a plunge to the depths of the ocean, details have finally surfaced on just who Jason Momoa's King of Atlantis will be butting heads with when James Wan's **Aquaman** makes a splash in July 2018. As many have speculated, the Marine Marvel will indeed be going up against Black Manta when Aquaman gets his own solo movie. The supervillain debuted way back in 1967 and went on to become the King of Atlantis' greatest foe over the ensuing decades. Black Manta has no actual superpowers to speak of; instead, he's just an all-round badass, brutal fighter who is in top physical condition and has a nifty-looking trademark suit that allows him to head down to the depths of the deepest seas. What's often so appealing about the rogue is that there's so much mystery surrounding him, with his real identity still unknown to this day. In fact, he didn't even get any semblance of an origin until the 1990s, with it revealed that he was once abused by the crew of a ship, which in turn gave him a grudge against the sea. Seeing Aquaman as a symbol of the sea, he set his sights on the hero. That origin was later changed up to have it simply be that Black Manta blamed Aquaman for the death of his father. At present, **Aquaman** is set for a July 27th, 2018 release.

One DC movie that has been on and off for years now is an outing for the Justice League Dark crew. Well, a JL Dark movie is now back on, and Warners has even hired a director in the shape of **Edge of Tomorrow**'s Doug Liman. Liman's involvement means that he's now officially departed 20th Century Fox's **Gambit** movie,



with that film seemingly in trouble once more. As for the Justice League Dark movie, that will be entitled **Dark Universe**. Guillermo del Toro famously worked on a Justice League Dark movie for years before ultimately having to depart the project due to his ever-busy schedule. The JL Dark team didn't actually come together until 2011 as part of DC's doomed New 52 relaunch. Made up of the likes of John Constantine, Swamp Thing, Deadman, Madame Xanadu, and Zatanna, the group were tasked with tackling the darker, magical threats that only they had the powers to stop. Despite Liman coming in to direct the movie, **Dark Universe** has yet to be given a release date. As mentioned earlier, though, Warner Brothers does have two release dates booked up for some mystery DC movies.

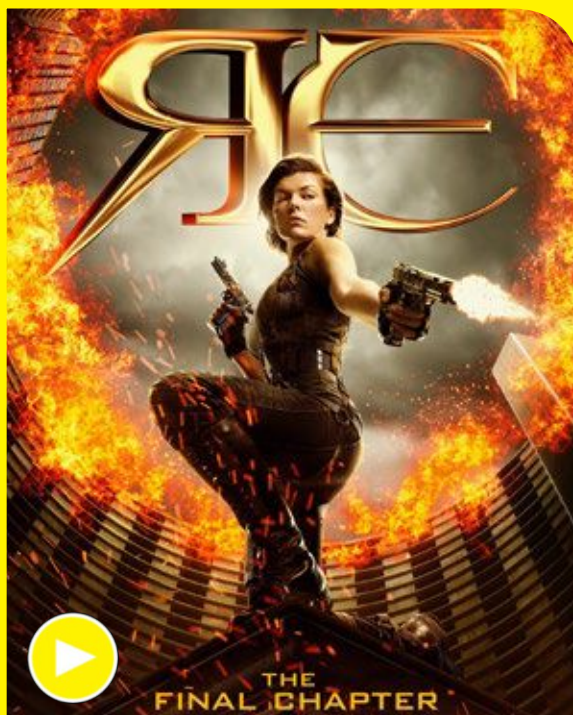
On the small screen, it's that time of the year where a whole host of superhero shows are getting set to return to our screens. First up, **The Flash** has brought in a bunch of the Scarlet Speedster's most infamous rogues ahead of Season 3 of the Grant Gustin-starrer: **Friday Night Lights'** Grey Damon has been cast as the iconic mirror-manipulating Mirror Master; **Awkward's** Ashley Rickards will be spinning into action as a female take on the Top known as Rosa Dillon; **Fargo's** Joey King will be the metal-controlling Magenta; and **The Vampire Diaries'** Todd Lasance will be turning up as villainous speedster the Rival, a comic book villain so often depicted as a foe of the Jay Garrick version of the Flash. As well as that, Gustin's Sultan of Speed will also be tackling the two overarching villains of the upcoming season, Dr. Alchemy and speedster Savitar, who will actually be working together to take down the Flash. Then there's the chance that Season Two's 'big bad', Teddy Sears' Zoom, could return as a take on Black Flash down the line. Make no mistake about it, Grant Gustin's Sultan of Speed is going to have his hands full when **The Flash** returns to US screens on October 4th, with a UK return to follow shortly after.

New villainous additions are not all that we've got to report on **The Flash** this month, however, for it's also been confirmed that Gustin's Barry Allen will be a part of a two-episode musical crossover with Melissa Benoist's Supergirl. **Supergirl**, of course, has moved from CBS to The CW for its second season, and this won't be the first time that the Maid of Might has met the Sultan of Speed, for the Flash turned up in National City during **Supergirl's** first season. Given how both Gustin and Benoist were part of **Glee**, you can see where the logic for a musical crossover event comes from. Plot-wise, it's believed that the villainous Music Meister will be the reasoning for all of the singing and dancing. And in an interesting rumour, there's chatter that it could be Joss Whedon who will be tasked with directing this two-parter. Whedon previously directed the musical episode of **Buffey**, whilst he was also involved in the first season of **Glee**.

Sticking with the Girl of Steel, it's been announced that Melissa Benoist's Kara Zor-El will be battling longtime Superman rogue Metallo during **Supergirl's** second season. Frederick Schmidt, best known for various short films, has landed the role of John Corben, aka Metallo, in the show. From what we're hearing about the rogue's presence in the series, he'll appear in at least two episodes and will actually battle both Benoist's Supergirl and Tyler Hoechlin's Superman during his time on the show. In fact, it will be an injury caused during a dust-up with the heroic duo that results in Corben becoming the Kryptonite-powered Metallo. Elsewhere on all things **Supergirl**, Kevin Smith has revealed that he'll be directing an episode of the series' upcoming season. Smith helmed an episode of **The Flash** last season and will return to handle the Scarlet Speedster once more during its upcoming third season, and now he'll soon be ticking the Maid of Might off his checklist. Now, can we just get good ol' Kev Smith to tackle **Arrow**...? **Supergirl** premieres its second season on October 10th.

Where Stephen Amell's Emerald Archer is concerned, it's been announced that he'll be doing battle with none other than legendary action star Dolph Lundgren during **Arrow's** fifth season. It's not yet known just who the **Rocky IV**, **Universal Soldier** and **The Expendables** star will be playing in the show, but he'll be the 'big bad' of the Russia-set flashback elements of **Arrow's** upcoming season. And Lundgren isn't the only new addition to the series, for Wil Traval has landed the role of Christopher Chance, aka Human Target. Traval will likely be best known to genre fans for playing Will Simpson/Nuke in **Marvel's Jessica Jones**. As for Human Target, the character is somebody who can disguise himself as other people, which is a power he uses to take on the identity of those being targeted by assassins. In this case, Chance will take on the persona

RESIDENT EVIL: THE FINAL CHAPTER



Although the last few movies haven't really delivered in terms of box office, the **Resident Evil** franchise still has a sizeable following, and writer/director Paul W. S. Anderson clearly wants to see the saga out all guns blazing, as depicted in the new teaser poster pictured. We can't say for sure whether this really will be the last time Milla Jovovich's Alice faces off against the legion of undead and the Umbrella Corporation, as she returns to where it all began - Raccoon City. **Resident Evil: The Final Chapter** is set to be released in the US on January 27th, with a UK outing on February 24th (although at the moment, Japan looks set to have the flick in time for Christmas!). Let's hope that gap doesn't suggest a DVD or VOD Premiere.

of Oliver Queen during Season Five. **Arrow** returns on October 5th.

In final DC TV news, **DC's Legends of Tomorrow** has cast Sarah Grey, best known as the flashback version of Norma Bates in **Bates Motel**, as the heroic Courtney Whitmore/Stargirl, **Gotham** has brought in **The Devil You Know's** Naïan González as the Alice to its Mad Hatter, and upcoming comedy **Powerless** has seen showrunner Ben Queen depart the project by mutual consent. AP

MARVEL

Where the Marvel Cinematic Universe is concerned this month, the majority of news surrounds Jon Watts' **Spider-Man: Homecoming**. First up, the film has brought in a new villain in the form of Phineas Mason, aka the Tinkerer. **Orange is the New Black's** Michael Chernus will be playing the rogue, who has long been rumoured to be a part of the first solo outing for Tom Holland's Spidey. The Tinkerer will play a 'significant' role in the film, with it believed that he'll help out Michael Keaton's Vulture in putting together his supervillain outfit using Chitauri technology left over from **Avengers Assemble's** Battle of New York. In another new addition, **Bones'** Jona Xiao has joined the film in an unknown role, and then there's the confirmation that Jon Favreau's Happy Hogan will be turning up alongside Robert Downey Jr.'s Tony Stark in **Homecoming**. What's also interesting this month is that new information is coming out on just what unknown roles many of the cast will be playing. Singer-cum-actress Zendaya has long been confirmed for a lead role in the film, and now comes word that she could well be playing none other than Mary Jane Watson. Nothing official has been revealed on that front, but various outlets are reporting that MJ will be turning up



in **Homecoming**, and Zendaya will be the one tasked with bringing this latest incarnation of Peter Parker's longtime girlfriend/wife. Elsewhere on the 'mystery' role front, speculation has many of the already-confirmed cast lined up with certain roles: Tony Revolori as high school bully Flash Thompson; Angourie Rice as future Daily Bugle secretary Betty Brant; Laura Harrier as Parker classmate and uber-brain Liz Allan; Jacob Batalon as reporter-turned-Hobgoblin Ned Leeds; and, most interestingly, Bokeem Woodbine as the villainous Shocker. Of course, there's nothing official on what roles the aforementioned talent are playing in the film, and it may well be that we have to wait until **Spider-Man: Homecoming** is released on July 7th, 2017 before we find out one way or another.

Elsewhere in the MCU, Joe Russo has confirmed that, as many presumed, the end of **Captain America: Civil War** did indeed signal Chris Evans' Steve Rogers abandoning the Captain America mantle. Joe, along with brother Anthony, directed **Captain America: The Winter Soldier**, **Captain America: Civil War**, and will be helming the next two **Avengers** outings. Whether this means that we'll get someone else taking on the Cap moniker in **Avengers: Infinity War** remains to be seen. In the comic book realm, both Bucky Barnes/Winter Soldier and Sam Wilson/The Falcon have taken over as the Sentinel of Liberty at various points, so it wouldn't surprise anybody if Sebastian Stan's Bucky or Anthony Mackie's Wilson at some point take over the iconic shield. As for Steve Rogers, it may be that he could take on the role of Nomad, a persona who he transitioned to in the comics after Rogers walked away from the Captain America gig. But whilst questions remain over Captain America in **Avengers: Infinity War**, this month brings word from Vin Diesel himself that the Guardians of the Galaxy will indeed be present and accounted for in the next **Avengers** film. It's expected that Thanos will again have a presence in James Gunn's **Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 2** - released April 27th, 2017 - and the Mad Titan finally heading to Earth in **Infinity War** will likely be the trigger for Chris Pratt's Star-Lord and co. to join the fight alongside Earth's Mightiest Heroes when **Avengers: Infinity War** hits cinemas on April 27th, 2018.

Another hero who will be joining the fight in **Infinity War** will be the debuting Captain Marvel, to be played by **Room**'s Brie Larson. Following that appearance, Carol Danvers/Captain Marvel, will be getting her own 2019 solo movie. That film has yet to find a director, but this month brings some information on who Marvel Studios and Disney currently have in mind to helm **Captain Marvel**. At present, it's believed that the shortlist for that job is made up of **Whale Rider**'s Niki Caro, **The Meddler**'s Lorene Scafaria, and Lesli Linka Glatter, who's best known for working on TV shows such as **The Walking Dead** and **Homeland**. Despite having no director in place at this stage, **Guardians of the Galaxy**'s Nicole Perlman and **Inside Out**'s Meg LeFauve are currently working on **Captain Marvel**'s screenplay ahead of a March 8th, 2019 release.

And in some final Marvel movie news, Michael Peña has confirmed that the scene-stealing Luis will be back for **Ant-Man and the Wasp**, whilst Natalie Portman has revealed that, as far as she knows, she's 'done' with the Marvel Cinematic Universe. Peña appeared as Luis in Peyton Reed's **Ant-Man** last year, whilst Portman played the Thunder God's love interest in both **Thor** and **Thor: The Dark World**.

Moving things down to the small screen, the already-confirmed solo series for Jon Bernthal's Punisher could arrive sooner than we were expecting. It was previously believed that **Marvel's The Punisher** wouldn't be premiering until 2018 at the earliest, but a recent image surfaced online from Netflix to suggest

ROGUE ONE: A STAR WARS STORY



As excitement mounts for the first of the standalone movies, we have been introduced to the new droid we've been looking for. In the month we sadly said goodbye to actor Kenny Baker, we meet C2-B5, an Imperial astromech droid. Although looking rather familiar, being on the dark side, this little fella is a nice shade of charcoal. The word on the droid is somewhat different to what we know about fan-favourite R2-D2, with the official line saying, 'Imperial technicians do not grant their droids independence, and subject them to frequent memory wipes to keep them subservient', leading to plenty of speculation as to what C2's role will be in the new movie. It's worth bearing in mind that **Rogue One** centres on the hunt for the plans of the Death Star, and we all know how they were smuggled off the Rebel Cruiser at the beginning of **A New Hope**. We'll find out just how much (or little) this new addition fits into the film when **Rogue One: A Star Wars Story** hits cinemas on December 16th.

that the series could actually debut next year. The image was soon pulled, but it got fans eagerly talking about when we may see Frank Castle resurface following his well-received presence in Season Two of **Marvel's Daredevil** earlier this year.

From one new Marvel-based show to another, and Bryan Singer has teased that FX's upcoming **Legion** may end up tying in to future entries in the **X-Men** movie franchise. The new series is based around Dan Stevens' David Haller, the troubled son of Charles Xavier. Believed to be insane, Haller comes to realise that maybe all of the voices in his head are actually more real than he first thought. **Fargo**'s Noah Hawley is the showrunner on **Legion**, and the show is expected to air next year. If and how the series links to the **X-Men** films will certainly be interesting to see...

Arguably saving the best to last, in some news that's sure to excite many a Marvel comic book fan, fan-favourite Squirrel Girl is set to headline a **New Warriors** comedy series for Marvel Entertainment and ABC Studios. In the comic book world, the New Warriors team are essentially a junior version of the Avengers, made up of the likes of Nova, Firestar, Speedball, and Dagger over the years. Squirrel Girl is a cult favourite of many, with Doreen Green having the unique ability of being able to communicate with squirrels, not to mention having her own superhuman senses, strength and agility. Anna Kendrick has recently talked up how she'd be interested in playing Squirrel Girl should the chance come up, so we'll have to see if that develops into anything. Whilst this new show, which is currently being shopped around cable and streaming outlets, will be called **New Warriors**, the series will be largely based around Squirrel Girl. AP

MEG

There's a been a case of Bingbing transplant recently as Fab Bingbing has had to drop out of commitments for giant shark flick **MEG**, only to be replaced by namesake Li Bingbing (**Resident Evil: Retribution**).

The Warner Bros-produced movie - based on Steve Alten's cult book **MEG: A Novel of Deep Terror** - is set to be directed by John Turteltaub, with Jason Statham, Rainn Wilson, Ruby Rose, and Jessica McNamee lining up to be chum. The current word on the adaptation is that it will focus on an international underwater program that comes under threat from an ominous and mysterious danger. Unfortunately for the workers based on this facility, they will be stranded at the bottom of the ocean and with a dangerous predator waiting to pounce. Statham will portray a former naval captain who is tasked with rescuing those in danger before it's too late. We'll find out which of these stars will fall foul of the eighty-foot megalodon when **MEG** is released on March 2nd, 2018.

horrorchannel

A round-up of what not to miss this month on Horror Channel...

SEPTEMBER 18TH - THE BLOB (1958)

It crawls.... It creeps.... It eats you alive! It also has a damn catchy surf-rock theme tune and boast a young Steve McQueen in the lead. The gelatinous space mass that consumes all in its path has certainly made its place known in cinema history, so now's your chance to catch up with it if you haven't done so already.

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OCTOBER 8TH - EDEN LAKE (2008)

British horror cinema got a shot in the arm with this engrossing but genuinely terrifying film that has Michael Fassbender (**Frank**, **X-Men**) and Kelly Reilly's holiday ruined by a group of sadistic teenagers who torment and ultimately torture the couple for their own amusement. Truly harrowing, this one!

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OCTOBER 12TH - BAD MEAT (2011)

A group of teens sent to a boot camp to mend their ways have to fend off flesh-crazed maniacs as the cook's meat turns the guards into ravenous monsters. Summer camp movies are always good fun, and this one certainly has a **Cabin Fever** vibe to add to the splatter.

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OCTOBER 5TH - CAPTAIN AMERICA (1979)

Long before Chris Evans donned the costume and picked up the shield of Marvel's patriotic hero, there was this ill-advised attempt to bring Steve Rogers to the screen. Looking more like Evel Knievel than the spandex-clad super soldier we know and love, it's still a camp fun ride.

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OCTOBER 15TH - CLOWN (2014)

A loving father who becomes a serial killer after donning cursed clown outfit? What else do you want? Eli Roth (**Hostel**) co-produced this fun shocker directed by Jon Watts, who will be bringing **Spider-Man: Homecoming** to the screen next year.

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This month sees two great cult favourites hit the station amongst the regular array of fantastic television. **Land of the Giants** is rarely seen these days, and has a growing reputation with fans. Originally aired at the end of the '60s, it follows a group whose sub-orbital ship goes astray, landing them on the titular planet. Essentially a re-run of **Lost in Space**, this is another of TV legend Irwin Allen's glorious repertoire that is always worth catching. Which you can do, from the very beginning, starting September 19th. Likewise, Dan Curtis' 1992 sci-fi miniseries **Intruders** is well worth staying off work for when it screens in the afternoon of September 19th/20th.

Horror Channel is available on SKY 319, Virgin 149, Freeview 70, Freesat 138 and TalkTalk 487.



WARCRAFT 2

Whilst this year's **Warcraft: The Beginning** may have disappointed many, director Duncan Jones is still hoping that a sequel may happen down the line.

Speaking recently about the prospect of a follow-up, Jones said, "If there were an opportunity for us to make another film in the **Warcraft** universe, I really feel like we did the hard work in the first movie as far as setting the table. I would love to capitalise on three-and-a-half years of hard work and be able to have some fun in that world now that I've done the hard work. Who knows, maybe I'm just being a masochist."

To give some perspective on the how the movie performed earlier this year, **Warcraft: The Beginning** took home a global box office of \$433.5 million from a \$160 million budget. That's not a horrendous return, but the cause for concern is that the film only made \$47.2 million in the ever-important US market. We shall be watching the developments on this with keen interest. AP

AND FINALLY...

Wrestling legend Bret 'The Hitman' Hart will be doing his thing on the big screen in Barry J. Gillis' **Tales from the Dark Zone**, which is said to follow 'a Medical Examiner who imagines how victims of a horrible car crash may have lived their lives.' Hart will play a Private Investigator who doesn't play by the rules.

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Max Landis is said to have started on a remake of his father's classic **An American Werewolf in London**. The 1982 original was John Landis' magnum opus, and as well as winning an Academy Award for Outstanding Achievement in Makeup for Rick Baker's (still) stunning transformation techniques. All we have to say about this decision for a do-over is why?

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You remember all the talk a while back about a **Tremors** TV show? Yeah, we'd forgotten about it, too, but it's now been confirmed that it will indeed be happening and it's found a home at Amazon. Kevin Bacon, star of the original and seemingly connected to everyone in the universe if you believe the infamous parlour game, is said to be thrilled at having the show set to appear on the online supermarket's VOD service. Now we just need a date for filming to start on the bugger.

TTC 429 stories by Martin Unsworth, Andrew Pollard. Edited by Martin Unsworth



STRANGE THINGS

by Christian Bone



Could It Be Magic?

Part of what has made Marvel Studios' movies so popular with fans is how they have never shied away from the excesses of the comic books. In only its fourth film 2011's *Thor*, the MCU introduced Norse Gods and alien lifeforms. A few years later we got a whole movie set in space with 2014's *Guardians of the Galaxy*. But at least that was all part of the same genre, so layman viewers wouldn't be too put out. With *Doctor Strange*, however, Marvel are going somewhere they've never gone before.

While you can read a more in-depth look at the history of the character later on in this very magazine, suffice to say that Doctor Stephen Strange is a very different superhero from the Avengers we've already met on the big screen. Rather than hi-tech suits or gamma radiation or super soldier serums, Strange derives his abilities from the mystic arts. Traditionally, comic book movies that play with the paranormal have not been amongst the most profitable of the genre – for instance, the *Ghost Rider* movies (rightfully) and the *Hellboy* films (sadly). However, it seems that 2016 is the year for mixing superhero movies with the supernatural.

Firstly, 20th Century Fox's *X-Men: Apocalypse* introduced ancient Egyptian and Biblical mythology to

The already expansive Marvel Cinematic Universe opens up a whole new realm of magic and mysticism in its latest movie DOCTOR STRANGE, which introduces Benedict Cumberbatch's Sorcerer Supreme to the world. But will it be as spellbinding as we all hope? STARBURST investigates...

the X-Men franchise through its titular immortal and omnipotent villain. This was something of a stark departure for a series which had previously been based in more sci-fi ideas like genetic mutation and alternate history.

Similarly, *Suicide Squad* brought magic and sorcery into the DC Extended Universe in only its third entry. Like Oscar Isaac's Apocalypse, Cara Delevingne's Enchantress was another ancient mystical being with oodles of power. And let's not forget Katana, with her soul-sucking sword.

Unfortunately, both of these movies received, let's say, lukewarm receptions from critics. In fact, the biggest superhero movie of the year – *Captain America: Civil War* – was the most grounded of 2016's offerings. Does this mean that inserting magic into your comic book film is, ironically, something of a curse? Probably not, as their detractors would claim that *Apocalypse* and *Suicide Squad* had more significant problems than just tweaking the rules of their storytelling world.

What is certain is that it is up to *Doctor Strange* to become the first supernaturally-themed superhero movie of 2016 to receive critical praise. Going by the very positive response to the trailers and marketing for the film so far, it is certainly on the right track.

The Doctor Is In

It doesn't hurt that it boasts one of the strongest casts ever in a superhero film. Not only does it have one of the biggest stars around right now in Benedict Cumberbatch, but the supporting roles are also filled with acclaimed actors. There is Tilda Swinton as mentor The Ancient One, Chiwetel Ejiofor as what looks to be Strange's partner Mordo, Rachel McAdams as love interest Christine Palmer and, last but not least, Mads Mikkelsen as villain Kaecilius.

Though he was Marvel's first choice, Cumberbatch had to turn the role down initially due to scheduling conflicts with his stint on stage as Hamlet. In his place, the studio courted Joaquin Phoenix until negotiations broke down after a few months due to the actor's reluctance to sign a multi-movie contract. Fortunately, by that time the movie's release date was able to be moved back from July 2016 to November, which meant that Cumberbatch could squeeze it in, after all.

So it all ended up for the best – not least because the actor and the character share basically the same backstory. As the movie will detail, Stephen Strange learned his craft in an East Asian monastery. Cumberbatch, meanwhile, spent his gap year as a volunteer English teacher at a Buddhist monastery in Darjeeling, India. He obviously wasn't learning magic (well, that we know of), but the star should be a natural at portraying a western man becoming familiar with a culture different from his own.

As for Cumberbatch's performance, we have not seen too much of him in action yet. What we have seen has mostly featured him dazed and out of his depth as he is introduced to the world of mysticism. We've currently got hardly any idea how the actor will come across as the fully-fledged Sorcerer Supreme. The (very) British star is also bravely using an American accent for the role, which is a good move on paper as a big part of Strange's character is his natural New Yorker arrogance. However, the last time Cumberbatch attempted a US drawl was in 2015's *Black Mass*, for which he was criticised by many for not nailing the accent. Hopefully, he's been to a few more voice coaches this time around.

Spellbinding Stars

Cumberbatch's co-stars should also get lots to work with over the course of the film, if fan theories are to be believed. For one, any comic fan will tell you that Ejiofor's character is not usually the ally he looks to be portrayed as in this movie. In the source material, Baron Mordo is Strange's archenemy – a spurned apprentice of the Ancient One who believes it is his right to be the world's Sorcerer Supreme. Whether we will see the Oscar-nominated actor go down the dark path in this film or in a sequel is not yet known.





Benedict Cumberbatch

(On what drew him to the film)

"I'm very excited about that spiritual dimension. It's something that's been a huge part of my life. I meditate a lot. That's a huge tool in trying to calm myself, get away from the crazy circus of it all, have a focused mind as well as be a kinder, considerate person in the world."

(On how different it is)

"It's a very different feel, different hero and different set of circumstances to what we've seen before. It's another moment during Marvel's evolution."

(On Strange's character arc)

"I think his main superhero trait is that the guy is unstopably stubborn. He won't cease. You see this character really go through the grinder and it's so violent, so non-stop and psychologically brutal... it's a huge character arc. It takes a long while before we get those heroic moments."



Scott Derrickson

(On the film's mystical elements)

"Traditionally, when you think about practitioners of sorcery, they tend to be static in the casting and speaking of spells, and then something odd happens that becomes the spectacle that you watch."

(In Doctor Strange, magic is...)

"just more immersive and bigger than the characters."

(On the film's wider impact)

"What the comics did was, they brought with **Doctor Strange** an extra dimension into psychedelia, mysticism, and spirituality and all these very '60s things and broke open the Marvel comic book universe into the Marvel multiverse. I think **Doctor Strange** is going to be the beginning of the Marvel Cinematic Multiverse. It's really serving the same function that the comic did."

Mads Mikkelsen

(On Kaecilius)

"He's not a villain in that way – he's a man who believes in something else than the hero. That doesn't mean that he doesn't want to make the planet look wonderful or he wants to save the world as well, but he has a different way of doing it. He is the antagonist, of course, but he's not necessarily wrong."



Rachel McAdams

(On why she joined the movie)

"I just love the director. I met with Scott [Derrickson] and loved his vision, he was so passionate. And the opportunity to work with Benedict was kind of a no-brainer. And Marvel makes amazing films, so it was a complete package."



Chiwetel Ejiofor

(On whether Mordo is good or bad)

"He's a very complex character that, really, I don't think can be nailed down either way, you know. I guess it's something to experience, is what I'd say."



Rachel McAdams is another one who may well have a bigger role later down the line. As has been suspected for a long time, she is playing a character known as Night Nurse in the comics - a medical professional who specialises in covertly treating injured superheroes. Christine Palmer isn't the most famous recipient of that code name, but Marvel probably decided not to adapt Linda Carter to the screen due to that name being closely associated with the Distinguished Competition (actress Lynda Carter played Wonder Woman in the 1970s).

And what about Mikkelsen as Kaecilius, who is apparently a Mordo-esque former student gone bad? On the face of it, the character is a strange (ahem) choice for the big bad of the first *Doctor Strange* movie, as the hero has a very rich rogues gallery in the comics that literally spans dimensions. However, it is thought that - in the style of *Star Trek Into Darkness* and *Spectre* before it - the film is using a different identity in the marketing to mask the real character the *Hannibal* star is playing. Could it be the Dread Dormammu, the fiery-headed entity who hails from the Dark Dimension? Only time will tell...

Mystic Makers

There is also some interesting talent behind the scenes too. Writer/Director Scott Derrickson is making his superhero debut with *Doctor Strange* and could well draw on his horror experience as the helmer of 2014's *Sinister* and its sequel. He's even co-written the film with his *Sinister* writing partner C. Robert Cargill. If there was a Marvel movie that crossed over to the scary side, it makes a lot of sense for it to be the one that introduces supernatural elements to the universe.

As well as a revolving door of directors (with recurring talent like the Russo Brothers and Joss Whedon notwithstanding), the MCU also employs a variety of Hollywood's finest composers to score its films. Joining a high-calibre list including Alan Silvestri, Danny Elfman, and Patrick Doyle is Michael Giacchino. The often underrated Giacchino has done some terrific work on everything from Pixar movies to the *Star Trek* reboot to *Mission: Impossible* to TV shows like *Lost*. Scott Derrickson has described the composer's work on *Doctor Strange* as 'magical', so the movie looks set to be taken care of on that front too.

Arguably more impactful than the direction and score on a film like this is the cinematography, as *Doctor Strange* is sure to have a very different look to other MCU movies. The realisation of magic, in particular, is something fans are looking forward to seeing. If you're not familiar with the character, it is important to note that Strange does not use *Harry Potter*-style magic, with wands and potions and whatnot. Instead, Marvel's mystic arts have a relatively scientific edge as they are more about manipulating reality and the elements.

As such, the magic of *Doctor Strange* will be a very visual affair - either in the form of streams of light pouring from the fingers or ancient symbols hanging in the air. In fact, it might not look too dissimilar to Tony Stark's A.I. systems. It's like *Thor*'s Jane Foster says: "magic is just science we don't understand yet."

MCU veteran Ben Davis is back as cinematographer and has described the film as 'Marvel's *Fantasia*', referencing Disney's stunning 1940s classic. Likewise, if that bit from the trailers in which a city is turned upside down is anything to go by, there might be a flavour of *Inception* to it as well. If Davis and his team have done their job right, there is a very real chance that *Doctor Strange* could end up being the most visually arresting Marvel movie ever.

Strange Origins

In terms of story, *Doctor Strange* actually looks to be very traditional. Mirroring Iron Man, in particular, Stephen Strange will begin as a man at the top of his privileged world - a celebrated neurosurgeon, to be precise. However, due to a tragic incident - a car crash rather than, say, being captured by terrorists - his world is turned upside down and he learns new skills with which to become a better person and to just generally save the world.





Even in this superhero-saturated time of ours, there is nothing wrong with a good old-fashioned origins story, however. Provided they inject something fresh into the way they tell this standard story structure, they can be very successful. Just look at *Deadpool* - its plot is actually very similar to many other first movies in a superhero franchise. The difference was that it was told with a raucous sense of humour and a knowing wink. If the novelty of magic is enough to do the same for *Doctor Strange*, there is no reason it would suffer from relying on a familiar set-up.

The odds are certainly in its favour. The Marvel Cinematic Universe has produced very few outright failures over the years, so we can hope that *Doctor Strange* will conjure up a strong critical reception and a lot of love from the fans. After all, this is probably the riskiest venture from the studio since *Guardians of the Galaxy* - and we all know how well that turned out. If this movie can marry the MCU house style with a full embrace of comic book craziness, Marvel will be onto another winner. We all love those regular heroes out there but sometimes it's good to be Strange.

DOCTOR STRANGE will be mystifying cinemagoers from October 28th.



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by **Andrew Pollard**

IT'S A KIND OF MAGIC

Let's take a look back at the history of the MCU's latest new face; one who happens to have a distinguished legacy in the comic books...



Whilst he may be not quite as prominent a character as Spider-Man, Captain America, or Iron Man, Dr. Stephen Vincent Strange is simply one of the most vitally important characters in Marvel Comics history. Having been created by the legendary Steve Ditko back in 1963, Doctor Strange soon became a major player in the Marvel world and a figure who is so often the glue who keeps the very Marvel Universe itself together. So with that said, let's dive into the magical world of the Master of the Mystic Arts, explore the roots of the Sorcerer Supreme, and find out just why he's such a pivotal figure of the comic book landscape.

Strange Origins

Débuting in *Strange Tales* #110 and sharing the issue with the original Human Torch, Stephen Strange was a completely unique character at the time, giving comic book readers someone and something that they had never seen before. Pulling inspiration from tales of black magic and being clearly influenced by





Chandu the Magician, Doctor Strange was more than just a genetically enhanced brute of a man, more than just a genius billionaire, more than just a superpowered everyman. No, Stephen Strange was bigger than all of that, for here was a character who was quite simply on a whole other level to those who preceded him and most of the ones who followed him. But let's not get ahead of ourselves, for first comes the question of how Doctor Stephen Strange became the hero we all know and love in the first place.

To go right back to his roots, Stephen Strange was a brilliant-yet-egotistical neurosurgeon. As ever with any good hero-in-waiting, tragedy was just around the corner for Strange in the form of a car accident. Rendering his hands useless due to severe nerve damage, in turn ruling him out of being able to perform the craft that he had mastered, the Good Doctor embarked on a mission across the globe to find a way to heal himself. Enter the Ancient One. This all-knowing, ever-wise being, who at that point in time was known as the Sorcerer

Supreme, took Strange under his wing, teaching him the ways of martial arts, meditation and, more importantly, all things magical. With his own powers now reaching impressive levels on their own, Strange's abilities were further enhanced when his outfit was adorned with the Cloak of Levitation, which gifts its wearer the power of flight, and the Eye of Agamotto, which allows the Doctor to see through illusions. As well as these powers, there's also the magical Orb of Agamotto, which allows Strange to detect magic anywhere at any time courtesy of some twisted clairvoyance-derived powers, and then there's the ever-faithful Book of Vishanti, to which the Master of Mystic Arts so often turns to in order to find just the right spell for whatever job is at hand. Taking on the Sorcerer Supreme mantle for himself by this point, Doctor Strange would set up home in New York City at his mansion, dubbed the Sanctum Sanctorum. And like so many rich heroes of the day, Strange would also be aided in his newfound herodrom by his pal, valet and all-round manservant, Wong. From that moment forward, Doctor Strange and his otherworldly ways were here to stay.

Rogues Gallery

Where their foes are concerned, certain superheroes are more blessed than others. For example, the likes of Spider-Man and Batman have rogues galleries overflowing with bad guys who are, at times, just as interesting as the heroes that they're battling. Other heroes, though, seem to be constantly stuck on a loop fighting the same one or two villains over and over because the rest of their foes are as dull as dishwater. Where Doctor Strange is concerned, though, he certainly has an impressive, if not all that vast, rogues gallery of his own. You see, due to the very nature of Doc Strange's own powers, the majority of his villains are all ridiculously powerful themselves.

Front and centre when it comes to Strange's most infamous comic book rogues is Baron Mordo. To be played by Chiwetel Ejiofor in the Marvel Cinematic Universe, Mordo is a villain who made his debut during only the second appearance of Doctor Strange. Mordo is someone who, like Strange, was under the tutelage and guidance of the Ancient One. Well, that was until Mordo turned on his mentor





and attempted to kill him. Luckily, the Master of the Mystic Arts was on hand to prevent this would-be assassination, and that was the catalyst in intensifying the rivalry between Doctor Strange and Baron Mordo, two figures who have extremely similar powers and abilities, even if Mordo often tends to lean more towards using black magic and thinks nothing of pulling a demon out of his back pocket.

But where there's Baron Mordo, there's also Dormammu. Despite sounding like a fancy cocktail or exotic liqueur, Dormammu is certainly not a threat to be taken lightly. Not only is he the master of Mordo, he also rules the ominous Dark Dimension. This bad guy is one that would make even the most stoic of heroes douse their superhero drawers, for he isn't even really a living, breathing person at all. Instead, Dormammu is an entity made up of pure energy and is capable of unleashing pretty much unlimited power on anyone he so chooses. The only drawback for this uber-rogue is that his power begins to diminish when he steps foot out of the Dark Dimension.

If battling a being made up of energy and with limitless powers wasn't enough, how

about fighting the very Devil himself? Well, the Marvel Universe version of the Devil, at least. That particular Devil in question would be Mephisto, and he is yet another bad egg who Doctor Strange has butted heads with many times over the decades. Alternatively, you may know him for Peter Fonda's depiction of the devilish villain in the first of the Nicolas Cage-starring *Ghost Rider* movies. And not content with fighting the Devil, the Sorcerer Supreme has also had his regular battles with Death. As in, yes, the Marvel Universe's very embodiment of Death and a female form who is often lusted after by Thanos. Then there's Nightmare, the creator of the nefarious Fear Lords and someone who thrives on fear itself. Not to mention, he's also had a unique relationship with longtime Fantastic Four nemesis Doctor Doom over the years, with the pair having worked together at times whilst also having done battle with each other more times than we can count. These villains are all just the tip of the iceberg, though, but you get the point we're trying to make: Doctor Strange's rogues gallery is made up of some seriously nasty, evil, all-powerful, not-of-this-world bastards of the highest order.

His Importance

It's all well and good to talk up how huge of a character Doctor Strange himself is or to regale you with details on some of his most infamous foes, but just why is the Master of the Mystic Arts such a pivotal piece of the Marvel jigsaw?

Well, not only is Doctor Strange one of the most powerful good guys in the Marvel realm, he's also a really, err, good guy. The Doc is somebody who so many heroes have turned to for advice, guidance and even training over the years. Whether he's openly a loud-and-proud card-carrying member of the Avengers or whether he's in seclusion in a different dimension, chances are that the Sorcerer Supreme will always be there to help out his fellow heroes if he possibly can. And whilst he is often depicted as the wise old sage of the Marvel world, even being a part of the higher power Illuminati that make so many decisions to keep the world on track (most notably deciding to hide the Infinity Gems and also making the call to send the Hulk up into space for the benefit of mankind), Strange is also refreshingly different to his fellow heroes. It's hard to put into words just how





much of a bigger scale he's operating on in comparison to so many of his peers. Forget saving Queens. Forget protecting New York. Forget keeping an eye on the United States. Forget overseeing global security, even. Stephen Strange has the ability to transcend actual dimensions. To compare him to a TV show, rather than Coronation Street being on one channel a few times a week, Doctor Strange is like shit reality TV in the way that he is everywhere at all times (apart from he's really, really awesome). Putting it simply, Stephen Strange is the cosmic glue that plays a vital role in actually keeping the Marvel Universe together.

What makes Doctor Strange so unique and important is that he just brings so much to the table. From overseeing all things Marvel from afar, wielding fireballs and operating portals to other lands, to simply just being a good sounding board to turn to, the Sorcerer Supreme is a major Marvel player who may sadly have been overlooked by many over the decades. Sure, he isn't as flash, brash, and cocky as certain other heroes, and some of his story arcs may feel a little timey-wimey

and a tad too out-there for some readers, but the Marvel world as our heroes know it may very well have collapsed in on itself at various times over the years if the Master of the Mystic Arts had taken some time off. In fact, he's actually one of the sorcerers tasked with protecting the Nexus, which is a group of multiverse portals that literally hold the various Marvel worlds and dimensions in place. Additionally, Strange is possibly even better known to casual comic book fans for his appearances in other heroes' books, such as coming to the assistance of Spider-Man at several points over the years when ol' Web-head has been in need of some advice or if he's in a bit of a Spider-funk. Which let's face it, given the history of Spider-Man, is quite a lot of the time for our poor beloved Wall-crawler.

Away from his place in the Marvel world, the character of Doctor Strange actually has an important place in overall comic book history, too. To many historians, the three-issue collection of what was known as *The Eternity Saga* is recognised as the very first proper American graphic novel. With talent such

as Stan Lee, Steve Ditko and Dennis 'Denny' O'Neil behind the story, readers saw Doctor Strange hunting for Eternity whilst being savagely followed across the world by the villainous Baron Mordo and Dormammu. Like a rent-a-magician, Strange has to escape these rogues whilst his hands are trapped in irons and after he's been left powerless and blind. That certainly beats any trick we were ever treated to by the late Paul Daniels, right? Well, apart from him somehow managing to snuffle Debbie McGee for himself, but we digress. Either way, Doctor Strange, of course, is not like any regular magician, regular person, or even regular superhero. No, Doctor Strange is a truly special and unique comic book character who brings with him so many elements of the mystical, so much scope for the otherworldly, so many truly dark, horror-laced tales, and such an overall package that makes him one of the most enjoyable, layered, and important characters that the comic book world has ever seen conjured up.



TALES FROM MARVEL'S CRYPT

by Rod McCance



DOCTOR STRANGE ISN'T THE ONLY CHARACTER WHO STRADDLES THE SUPERNATURAL IN COMIC BOOKS, SO LET'S TAKE A LOOK AT SOME OF THE SORCERER SUPREME'S STABLEMATES.

When you think of Marvel Comics, you think about Earth's Mightiest Heroes — those characters that cover lunch boxes and every other single piece of merchandise you can think of. Thor, the Incredible Hulk, Iron Man, and Captain America.

These are the characters infused in the Marvel name and legacy. But what about Blade, Morbius, and Man-Thing? Marvel's Avengers ruled the multiplexes this summer... but the infamous Bullpen has a dark side. With the release of *Doctor Strange*, it seems that this overlooked side of the Marvel Universe is about to take the spotlight.

A side filled with vampires, flame-headed motorcyclists and all things occult.

Marvel's first big cinematic outing was, of course, one of the darker characters.

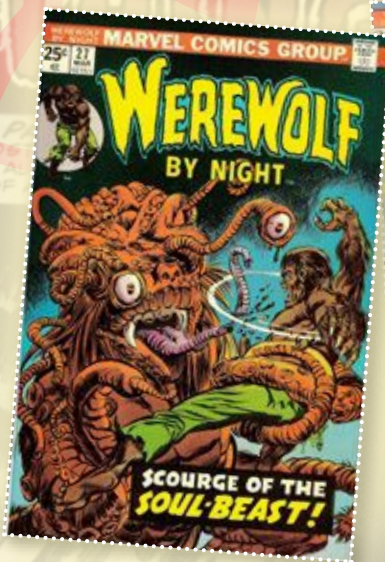
Blade arrived in 1998 and spawned two sequels. *Blade* was a precursor to the hugely popular Spider-Man movies and then, of course, the entire Marvel Cinematic Universe. Marvel then

released two Ghost Rider movies in the noughties, but to much negative reception. The reaction to *Ghost Rider* and its sequel meant that the supernatural side of Marvel Comics had to take a back seat on the big screen, until now. With the release of *Doctor Strange* as a major MCU blockbuster, it seems that the time is right to re-introduce these characters to a new audience. With Marvel seemingly being able to turn its hand to anything, it seems like the perfect opportunity to showcase the supernatural elements.

Marvel took a well-loved but unknown franchise in *Guardians of the Galaxy* and turned it into one of the most successful movies of 2014. It is now a franchise and the *Guardians* will crossover with the Avengers in *Infinity War* (and its currently untitled follow-up). By introducing *Doctor Strange*, it seems Marvel is keen to release the supernatural side of their mythology onto the world.

The Silver Age of Marvel arrived in the 1960s and Marvel always had a pulp appeal, but it wasn't until the '70s, that a darker, more twisted side emerged. This Bronze Age signalled a new era for Marvel. Deaths became more common, with many citing the death of Spider-Man's girlfriend Gwen Stacy as the start of the Bronze Age. In the 1970s both Marvel and DC started a push towards darker territory. With the Comics Code Authority relaxing some tight guidelines, the more twisted characters began to emerge, starting with classic Gothic characters like Dracula and Frankenstein and his monster for Marvel and then expanding into the outright horror of Swamp Thing on the DC side. With these characters, Marvel tried to mix their own mythology with the pulp horror





of titles from the 1950s such as *Tales from the Crypt* and *The Haunt of Fear* from EC Comics.

Marvel's darker side began with a more realistic approach, mirroring the naturalistic approach of contemporary films in depicting the gritty realism of life. The characters were still heroes, but more shades of grey were introduced. In the '70s, the subjects of racism, drug abuse and poverty. The counter culture of the '60s was manifesting itself in the comics of the following decade. Comics were growing up and the readers were growing up and with this came a demand for a more mature comic. Marvel's brand of supernatural was always counter-balanced with a realistic down-to-earth world.

In early 1971, Marvel began publishing *Savage Tales*; issue #1 featured Conan the Barbarian, but it was also notable for featuring Marvel's first supernatural horror character – Man-Thing. Man-Thing's origin is told in the first issue of *Savage Tales*, and he featured in several anthologies after, like *Adventure into Fear*, until 1974, when he would get his own ongoing series *The Man-Thing*. Man-Thing was essentially a way of testing the water for Marvel, but the company, and Stan Lee in particular, were developing a character that would be both supernatural and follow the superhero/villain template. This anti-hero formula would develop into a theme for Marvel's supernatural characters.

Michael Morbius, the Living Vampire, made his debut in *The Amazing Spider-Man* #101 and he resembled a supervillain more than any other fictional vampire. It was this blurring of the line that let Marvel develop its own style of superhero-infused supernatural





horror. Michael Morbius inhabited all the qualities of the tragic Spider-Man villain. An award-winning biochemist who was diagnosed with a rare blood disease, Morbius was searching for a cure when he became afflicted with pseudo-vampirism, which embodied all the traits of vampirism, like lust for blood and all the power and curses of a vampire. Morbius would open the door only for not supernatural characters, but an entire range of uncanny titles.

Werewolf by Night, The Tomb of Dracula and the ongoing Man-Thing strip all started in the '70s. Marvel even released some comics under their Marvel Monsters imprint. The Bronze Age of Marvel was quickly becoming the go-to place for all horror fans. Marvel continued to have many different anthology stories, including Adventures into Fear, Monster Madness, Tales of the Zombie, and Vampire Tales. However, several characters that would appear at this time were notable, but would have to wait over two decades to really gain any comics and mainstream attention.

One character who would be integral to Marvel's success - Ghost Rider. The story goes that the then-editor of Marvel, Roy Thomas, had a villain called the Stunt Master in a Daredevil strip, but the writer Gary Friedrich decided "I'd like to make the villain a really weird motorcycle-riding character called Ghost Rider" and Thomas thought the idea was so good it deserved its own comic. Inspired by the classic Western character the Ghost Rider (whose name then became the Phantom Rider), Ghost Rider got his own ongoing series which spanned 81 issues from the '70s into the '80s. A relaunch would appear in the '90s and the character started to gain a real cult appeal.

Ghost Rider hasn't had the easiest of times over the last few years. Two critically panned films damaged his legacy as one of Marvel's key supernatural characters of the supernatural. But in the '90s, he was important to Marvel, not just because of his links with the supernatural and demonic, but because of his anti-hero status, which propelled the character into



new popularity. Ghost Rider is also a key member of the Midnight Sons and Avengers of the Supernatural – two important groups in this area of Marvel lore.

Marvel created the Legion of Monsters, which became the superhero monster team. The first team included Morbius, Werewolf by Night, Man-Thing and leader Ghost Rider. All these characters became staples of the Marvel Monsters franchise, but they weren't always at the forefront. Marvel, of course, also created many other characters with links to the supernatural, and the spiritual even, with the likes of Moon Knight and Iron Fist. Then there are characters who are the antagonists – Blackheart, Mephisto, Dormammu, and Baron Mordo.

Most of those villains we just mentioned have all faced off against the Sorcerer Supreme himself, Doctor Strange. Strange is finally about to be introduced to the MCU and it's about time. We hope it can lead to other members of the Marvel supernatural fraternity joining their colleagues on the big screen. No longer should these characters be bit parts, they should be focal points. Moon Knight deserves a Netflix show, Ghost Rider has been confirmed to feature in an upcoming episode of *Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.*, but Doctor Strange comes first.

Strange first appeared in *Strange Tales* #110, a former neurosurgeon whose skill is taken away from him after a horrific car crash. Searching the globe for a way to revive his life and his career, he meets the Ancient One and becomes a practitioner of the mystical and martial arts. It seems that after delivering the Avengers on screen and exploring the cosmos in *Guardians of the Galaxy*, now is the right time for Marvel to explore its darker side on screen.

+



OUTSIDE THE BOX



Series Ten Brings in David Suchet

Another month gone by, and another month of filming for next year's Series Ten is in the can. The **Doctor Who** crew has been hard at work on Sarah Dollard's nineteenth century-set Episode Three and Mike Bartlett's more contemporary Episode Four, which has a new guest star – David Suchet.

Best known for his starring role as moustache icon Hercule Poirot in ITV's Agatha Christie adaptations – which aired from 1989 to 2013 – Suchet will be guest starring as a character known as 'The Landlord'. A mysterious chap, this Landlord has been seen filming with Peter Capaldi and Pearl Mackie on location at Fields House in Newport; a location previously used as the Weeping Angels' hideout in 2007's fan favourite *Blink* and which may now be standing in as Bill's student house. I'm glad Poirot was never my student landlord – he might have figured out what happened to the living room table.

The next episode to go before cameras will be the 2016 Christmas Special. This will give Pearl Mackie a bit of a break, as Bill's not going to appear in this, instead making her début in the first 2017 episode, believed to air in April. News on who'll be joining Peter Capaldi's Doctor for this festive adventure is expected very soon.

New Books Out in Time for Christmas...

Official information has surfaced on a range of new **Doctor Who** tie-in books. *A History of Humankind* will take the form of a Coal Hill School history textbook that the Doctor has defaced with his own observations and opinions. *The Twelve Doctors of Christmas* will showcase short stories featuring the twelve incarnations of the Doctor, all with a festive setting and some new illustrations. *The Official Annual 2017* will bring us the usual mix of adventures and puzzles. And *Time Lord Fairy Tales – Slipcase Edition* will basically be a reprint of last year's fairy tale-inspired collection, but with each story in a separate hardback edition plus a new story entitled *The Emperor Dalek's New Clothes*. These four will all be released on October 6th, and then coming a little later on October 25th will be *The American Adventures*, a collection of short stories featuring the Doctor visiting America, from the Battle of New Orleans to the digging of New York's subway tunnels. Any of these would make a fantastic stocking filler for any Whovian!

Capaldi and Mackie Make NYCC Début

Current **Doctor Who** stars Peter Capaldi and Pearl Mackie are to make their New York Comic Con début this October, in what will, in fact, be Mackie's first appearance at any convention since becoming the latest companion. They'll be appearing on a panel alongside showrunner Steven Moffat and executive producer Brian Minchin, during which fans will get a sneak peak at this year's Christmas Special as well as hints on what's in store in Series Ten. To make this an even more exciting event, there'll be another panel with Patrick Ness and the stars of **Class**, plus former **Who** stars Matt Smith, Karen Gillan, and Jenna Coleman will be present to meet fans and sign autographs. New York Comic Con runs from October 6th-9th.

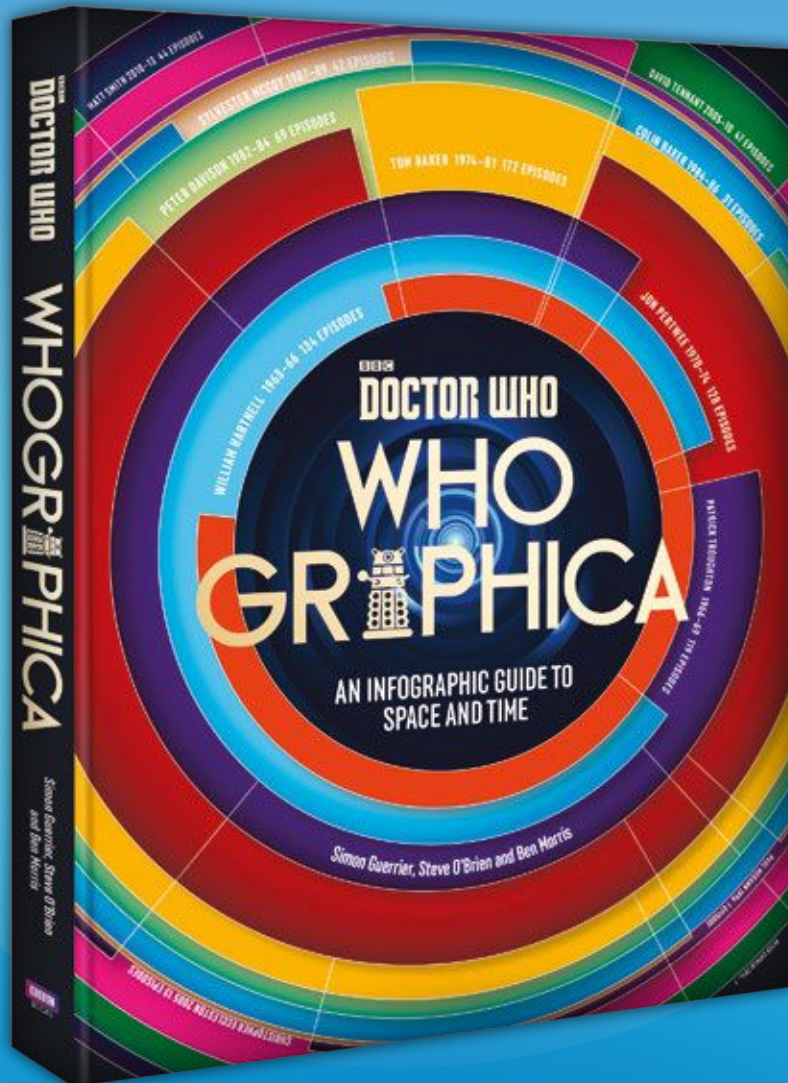
CLASS Begins in October; Characters and Image Revealed

We may not have much in the way of new **Doctor Who** this year, but the latest spin-off, Patrick Ness's **Class**, is close to release, now announced as airing this October. Official images are starting to surface; this one shows Katherine Kelly as Miss Quill and Sophie Hopkins as April. Set in Coal Hill Academy (formerly the Coal Hill School seen in **Who** from *An Unearthly Child* all the way up to *The Magician's Apprentice*), **Class** will follow April and her sixth-form mates as they deal with social anxiety, sexuality, and the collapsing of space-time around the school due to all the Doctor's visits. It will air on the online BBC Three, with a BBC One screening to follow.



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WATCHING DOCTOR WHO

AN IN-DEPTH LOOK
AT THE WHONIVERSE
BY JR SOUTHALL



There's this thing called an echo chamber, a metaphorical room rather like the one inhabited by Xoanon in *The Face of Evil*, the purpose of which is to bludgeon the unwitting innocent into believing all kinds of nonsense. Such as that 1965's *Feast of Steven*, never sold abroad and likely never copied by the BBC, might have turned up in Ireland along with the other eight still-missing instalments of *The Daleks' Master Plan*. Or that *Marco Polo* was remastered alongside *The Enemy of the World* and *The Web of Fear* in 2013, and has been sitting on iTunes waiting to be released ever since.

Stuff that's all kinds of nonsense, in other words, but that – when repeated frequently enough by a variety of voices sufficient to make it seem like a consensus – can begin to feel convincing.

Something remarkably similar happens with broadcast *Doctor Who*, as demonstrated by the following (which turned up on a particular forum just as I was writing this, and I'm paraphrasing): "If no

one less intelligent than yourself is able to work out what the Doctor's up to, then why does a talented actor like Capaldi bother with material that alienates much of the other 99% of the audience?"

The context for the comment came after the person posting it (who shall remain as anonymous here as on the forum in question, so let's call him or her Muscles) had received an explanation for a plot point they had claimed was never explained. Not only did the person explaining clarify the situation, they also pointed out where in the episode the issue was made clear for the benefit of the audience. At which juncture our Muscles replied with the above – in other words, that the explanation was so opaque that he (or she), along with presumably another 99% of the series' audience, couldn't be expected to understand it.

And patently that's nonsense, for all sorts of reasons. But chiefly because our Muscles is claiming to speak for all but 1% of the audience.

The facts are self-explanatory. *The Magician's Apprentice* was watched by 6.54 million people, charted 13th across British television for the week, and received an AI of 84 – meaning a representative sample of around five thousand viewers (of a panel of 20,000) collectively gave it an average score of 8.4 out of 10. A brief glance at the forum where the comments were posted shows more than 70% of the visitors there rating the episode 8/10 or better (fewer than 10% rated it 'below average'), so it's hard to work out how it was 'alienating 99% of the audience' even if they *hadn't* understood the plot.

So what would lead someone who is by all reasonable criteria an unrepresentative member of the audience – the 83,000 members of Gallifrey Base comprise less than 1.3% of the total UK viewership of the episode (and many of those members aren't in the UK anyway), while the number who voted in the poll is less than 4% of the membership of the forum (fewer than 0.05% of the viewers), with the number actively

involved in the conversation being much smaller still – to possibly think they're talking on behalf of the vast majority of the people watching?

In order to accord the AIs any validity you would need to consider the 0.08% of viewers who completed the survey as more representative of the 6.54 million audience, than the lone voice who is only *claiming* to speak for 99% of them. You can of course assume that if one person has said something, then no doubt there are others thinking it. But how many?

Gesellschaft für Konsumforschung, who collect the AI figures, are the fourth largest market research company in the world, and weight their figures for a number of criteria – age, gender, location, social background, viewing platform and so on – in order to ensure their results are a fair representation. Whereas the lone keyboard warrior can only genuinely claim to represent other lone keyboard warriors of a similar mindset; we can make assumptions about that mindset (such as that Muscles perhaps represents somebody who enjoyed the simplicity of the original series and struggles with the emotional and thematic complexity of the revival, given his or her actual comment), but unlike GfK, we have no way of knowing if these assumptions are accurate.

So how many people might Muscles genuinely be speaking for? If you calculate the average rating on the forum, you reach a figure of approximately 77.86 – meaning a broad base of *Doctor Who* fans enjoyed the episode roughly six points or so less than a mainstream audience did. As a member, we can assume Muscles is probably a fan, so we can also assume there's a correspondingly smaller chance he speaks for 'real' people than those predisposed to be invested in the programme. Let's assume that Muscles might speak for the opinions of anyone who scored the episode 3/10 ("This one's bad but it's got some good in it") or less on the forum, rather than including those who gave it a 4/10 ("It's below average, but only just!") or better. That's 6.79% of the fans who voted. Weighting for the difference between



fandom's appreciation against the general public's, that's 6.29% of 6.54 million, just over 537,000. Still a huge number, but nothing like the 6.47 million that Muscles was claiming to speak on behalf of.

So why on earth would Muscles be labouring under the obvious misapprehension that he or she speaks for all those millions?

537,000 might be just a tiny fraction of six-and-a-half million, but it is nevertheless a big enough number for it to *seem* as if there's a problem. Of course, there isn't; the BBC's average AI across all programming is actually 82 (or was, when last calculated), and it's generally accepted that AIs climb as viewing figures drop, given that programmes with smaller audiences tend to attract only those already inclined towards enjoying them, whereas programmes with higher audiences will be watched by greater numbers who care concomitantly less about them. So for a widely watched programme to be receiving AIs above or in the region of the average is in fact a significant achievement; a huge proportion of those 537,000 will actually be enjoying *Doctor*

Who less than the rest of the 6.54 million because they were less inclined to from the start, rather than because they think the programme itself is under-achieving.

However, it only takes a handful of people to be posting the same opinion in the same place – particularly if contrary opinions are in rather shorter supply – for that opinion to *feel* like the consensus, rather than a minority view. Given that nearly 7% of fans aren't happy with the episode, and particularly given that people who are happy with something rarely feel the need to log onto forums and espouse their satisfaction (take a look at the thread and see if the positive posts outweigh the negative ones by a difference of 93% to 7%), then seeing your minority view in the majority of those expressed can certainly make it feel like the popular opinion.

It isn't. 6.29% is not a consensus. 500,000+ is easily a large enough number for like-minded people to find their opinions replicated many times over in places where those opinions tend to be championed, but the truth is that Muscles doesn't speak for anything like the number of people he thinks he does. It's a delusion brought on by an inability to empathise with alternative opinions. It does, however, lead to comments like this:

"I dislike Steven Moffat's writing], therefore everybody dislikes Steven Moffat's writing], therefore it must be objectively of poor quality."

Clearly, if the average AI for the series is somewhere in the region of the average AI for BBC programming in general, it is ridiculous to claim that "everybody" dislikes the writing. And yet that's what people will often do. What's worse is when this opinion is treated as an impartial conclusion, in spite of it being a judgement on an issue of *quality* – something that can only realistically be subjectively quantified.

A comparison with the original series does Muscles few favours either. *Genesis of the Daleks* and *The Caves of Androzani* (the two 'best' stories according to a series of polls in *Doctor Who Magazine*), achieved AIs of 57 and 66 respectively.

ARTWORK BY SIMON BRETT





INTO THE MYSTIC

Magic and mysticism abound this month, and Sylvester McCoy's Seventh Doctor was most likely the best versed in such business. Certainly for students of Arthurian legend, as *Battlefield* posited that he would either become or had in fact already served as Merlin, that most famous of wizards, at some point in his long life. Arthur C. Clarke's famed Third Law is quoted and indeed serves a purpose into the bargain...

Namely, "any sufficiently advanced technology is indistinguishable from magic". Swords and sorcery have come to Lake Vortigern courtesy of the sorceress Morgaine - better known perhaps as Morgan le Fay - who has a score to settle with an old enemy, the Doctor. He and his companion, Ace (Sophie Aldred), will, of course, end up at the heart of intrigue following an archaeological dig and the discovery of a scabbard proving pivotal in establishing that something is afoot.

Well, that and a company of knights, one of whom knows the Doctor by another name!

ANCELYN: Merlin. Against all hope.

SHOU: Merlin?

ACE: You've got it wrong, mate. This is the Doctor.

ANCELYN: Oh, he has many faces, but in my reckoning, he is Merlin.

DOCTOR: You recognise my face, then?

ANCELYN: No, not your aspect, but your manner that betrays you. Do you not ride the ship of time? Does it not deceive

the senses being larger within than out? Merlin, cease these games and tell me truly, is this the time?

Inevitably, the timing isn't quite right. Not only has this Merlin no idea of his role in proceedings, but the man he either previously has or will serve is already dead, rendering Morgaine's pursuit of him mostly fruitless.

Though there is at least time for Ace

to emerge from the lake holding Excalibur, or at least a version of the famed sword, just to tick a few boxes. Before even that, the little chap in the question mark pullover was at the centre of the machinations of a being even older than the legends of Arthur...

Fenric, or Hastur the Unspeakable as it is known within the pantheon of Great Old Ones following attempts at cross-pollination with the works of



H. P. Lovecraft (see the likes of *All-Consuming Fire* and *White Darkness* from the *New Adventures* novel range), was retrospectively revealed to have been manipulating events to bring Ace to the Doctor. How else are we to explain her presence on Iceworld by way of Perivale?

When Melanie Bush departs, the TARDIS becomes her latest home from home. Surely not entirely coincidentally, talk of a mythical beast could be said to prompt her curiosity in the first place.

MEL: *I knew there must be a reason why you brought us here. You want to see the dragon, don't you?*

DOCTOR: *Oh really, Mel, it's fascinating. Travellers claim to have seen it throughout the centuries, but there's never been any proof.*

MEL: *Like the Loch Ness monster.*

DOCTOR: *Loch.*

MEL: *Och!*

ACE: *You're going to go looking for the dragon?*

DOCTOR: *Absolutely.*

ACE: *Oh, cool. Can I come too?*

But it's the hidden hand of Hastur that holds the cards, as revealed in another Ian Briggs-written story, *The Curse Of Fenric*, bringing down the curtain on the first phase of the relationship between Ace and her dear Professor. Not before the first real strain on it in Marc Platt's *Ghost Light*, as she's taken back to the scene of a previous encounter with an undefined evil when the TARDIS pitches up at Gabriel Chase in time for a meeting with Josiah Samuel Smith.

ACE: *Face-ache Matthews in there says this house is Gabriel Chase.*

DOCTOR: *So?*

ACE: *It was all falling down last time I saw it in 1983. You tricked me! This is Perivale!*

Onwards in time from the Victorian era



to the height of the Second World War, scientist Dr Judson is hard at work on the Ultima machine in an obvious nod to Alan Turing's similar tide-turning endeavours on the famous Enigma code cracker as used to win us the war, later seen unfolding through the eyes of Matt Smith's Eleventh Doctor while answering a summons from Prime Minister and old friend Winston Churchill during *Victory Of The Daleks*.

There, the Nazis are not the real enemy, Professor Bracewell's Ironsides revealing their true nature in exposing their creator as an android of their creation and bluffing their way off Earth with the threat of exposing London to the

Luftwaffe's finest.

Just to confuse matters a little, Neo-Nazis were among those bidding for control of the Nemesis statue back when the Doctor was a little younger but Scottish and of a darker hue. That was in *Silver Nemesis*, when first he donned a fez, as he would a little later down the line!

Long after Lady Peinforte, who kept a chess board in her study, another clue to Fenric's influence, had asked Ace if she and, by extension, the audience knew who the Doctor really was, another pivotal question would be posed by the woman who would become his 'wife'.

"What in the name of sanity have you got on your head?"

The answer, of course, is simple. **"It's a fez. I wear a fez now. Fezzes are cool!"** Can we say we're any closer to answering the other one, mind? **"Professor? Doctor? Who are you?"**

It was his Seventh incarnation who had hinted that he was more than just another Time Lord. *Lungbarrow*, the final *New Adventures* novel outing for him, posited that in the early days of Gallifrey, the Cult of Pythia's mysticism had begun to be displaced by the hard science of the trio of Rassilon, Omega, and the Other - about whom little is known.

The last of these becomes the Doctor following a suicide by Loom and subsequent rebirth of sorts - the scientific solution to reproduction as conceived for the benefit of the Time Lords following a curse of sterility placed upon the new order and its people by Pythia, a high priestess of the old magic/ways.

In short, a lot to keep under that hat of his!

CHRISTOPHER MORLEY



REVIEWS

THE LATEST
DOCTOR WHO
RELEASES REVIEWED
AND RATED



DOCTOR WHO: THE OFFICIAL COOKBOOK
AUTHOR: JOANNA FARROW / PUBLISHER: BBC BOOKS / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

One of the oddest curios of classic Doctor Who merchandise was The Doctor Who Cookbook. Released in 1985 and written by the unlikely candidate of the show's production manager at the time (and partner of '80s Who boss John Nathan-Turner) Gary Downie, the memorable cover depicted a Cyberman, a Dalek and a Yeti dressed as waiters and chefs. Given the original's lofty status in the annals of Who tie-in books, then, the brand-new Doctor Who: The Official Cookbook had a lot to live up to. Thankfully, it is an all-round high-quality product.

Subtitled 40 Wibbly-Wobbly, Timey-Wimey Recipes, The Official Cookbook includes a broad range of Who-flavoured cuisine. There are spacey-wacey versions of classic treats (gingerbread Doctors), as well as in-universe favourites (jelly babies and fish fingers and custard, obviously) and some dubiously-connected ones (Captain Flapjacks, anyone?). Some might be put off having a go at the recipes as, being based on Doctor Who monsters and the like, most are fairly ambitious makes. Thankfully, Cook's Tips are inserted throughout and contain

some extra advice to ensure things go smoothly. Plus, there are several pages of Timey-Wimey Templates at the back of the book to aid you in getting the scale right.

Writer Joanna Farrow is clearly a big Who fan as well as a foodie, as the book is littered with references and quotes from Doctor Who history. Handily, it allows you to top up your Whoniverse general knowledge while you are waiting for your food to cook. And if you are a connoisseur of puns as well as good grub, you will also find much to love on that front, as the book is full of food-related Who wordplay. For example, the chapter on cakes is called Egg-Stir-Mix-Bake. You just can't fault that level of punnery.

So whether you are the greatest chef in the galaxy or are yet to make your first (TAR) dish, Doctor Who: The Official Cookbook thoroughly deserves a place on your kitchen shelf. It is gorgeously-made, provides lots of helpful tips and, most importantly, is full of Dalek-table treats.

CHRISTIAN BONE

★★★★★★★★★ 8



TORCHWOOD #1
WRITER: JOHN BARROWMAN, CAROLE BARROWMAN / ARTIST: ANTONIO FUSO, PASQUALE QUALANO / PUBLISHER: TITAN / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Torchwood was always a mixed bag (the show only reached its full potential in the 2009 mini-series Children of Earth) and with the drawn-out ten-part US co-production Miracle Day in 2011, it looked as if the series had finally reached the end of the line.

Yet the show has kept ticking over with the odd original novel (the most recent

of which, 2012's Exodus Code, was also written by the show's charismatic star John Barrowman with his sister Carole) and new audio releases from the ubiquitous Big Finish. Now there's a new comic book series courtesy of Titan, who are all over virtually every incarnation of Doctor Who in a dizzying array of comic releases. It's difficult to assess quite where a multi-episode comic book story is going on the basis of its first instalment, but on the evidence of World Without End – Part 1, we're on narrative territory we're familiar with from the TV series; but also, perhaps inevitably, this is a Torchwood aimed squarely at the show's hardcore fans as it makes no concession to anyone who hasn't kept up with developments in the Torchwood universe in other media since the series ended. So if you haven't read Exodus Code and you're not up to speed with Big Finish, there's a chance you might find yourself a bit lost as this new adventure kicks off. As World Without End opens, Captain Jack is still travelling with the crew of the ice-rigging ship Ice Maiden, augmented by alien tech (see Exodus Code), something mysterious appears in "Sully Bay" in Wales, an old figure from the show's past resurfaces at Torchwood House in Scotland (birthplace of the whole series in the Tooth and Claw episode from season two of Doctor Who) and in Newport Gwen Cooper and her long-suffering husband Rhys are enjoying some time away from their daughter Anwen

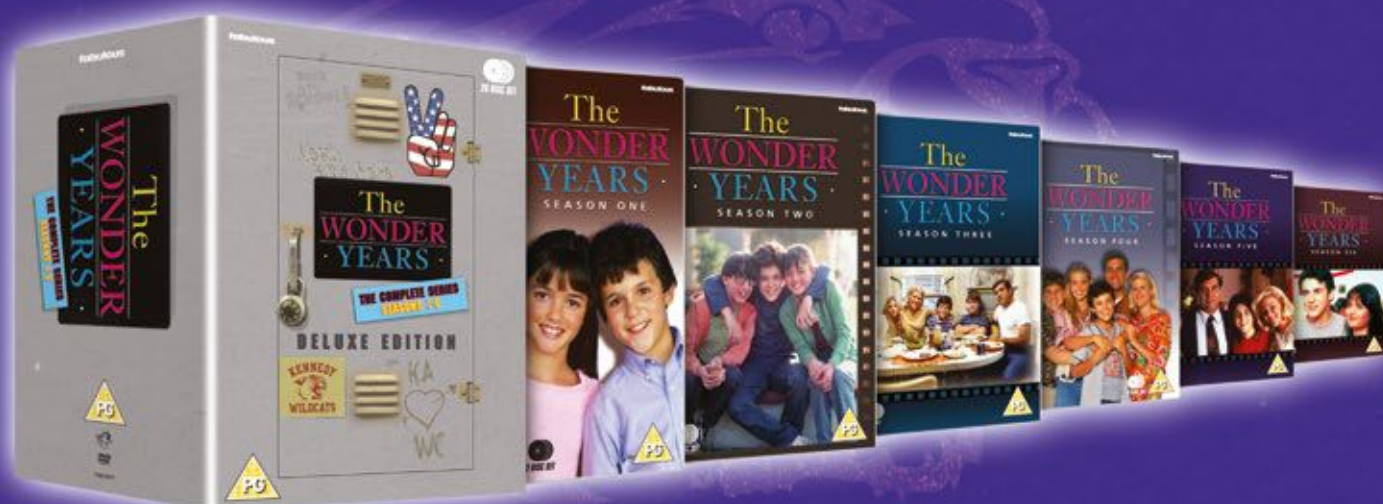
(presumably on the basis that young kids don't have much dramatic value in a comic strip). Before long, Captain Jack is back in their lives and they're being attacked by ninjas on flying jet-skis.

Quite where all this is heading is anyone's guess at this stage; this first issue is about putting the story's players in place and setting up mysteries that will undoubtedly unravel as the series progresses. As a first issue, it can't help but feel a little bitty and uninvolved and it's certainly not designed for casual viewers who quite enjoyed the TV series but haven't kept up with developments since it went off air. But maybe that's how it should be; Barrowman continually hints that a TV resurrection isn't impossible, but for now Torchwood belongs to its most earnest followers who will feel amply rewarded by this hectic, pell-mell romp which is written with some verve and brought to the page by illustrations which only occasionally resemble the main characters as seen on TV. It's an intriguing, if hardly inclusive, start to this latest chapter in the Torchwood saga and if it doesn't exactly scream 'essential purchase' it's good enough to make sticking with it a worthwhile investment just to see how and where the story is heading.

PAUL MOUNT

★★★★★★★ 6

The WONDER YEARS



ALL 115 EPISODES,
ALL THE UNFORGETTABLE MUSIC
and over **23 HOURS**
of **BONUS MATERIAL**

OUT NOW ON DVD

LIVVY BOOTE is...

THE GIRL FROM X PLANET X



I found this on Google Images.

One day, I came home from lectures at university and my roommate was watching a children's cartoon. In shame, she slammed her computer shut.

"What's that you're watching?" I asked, reserving a small amount of judgement that my twenty-one-year-old friend had been watching a kid's show.

And that was how I discovered *Avatar: The Last Airbender* - one of the best TV series I've ever seen to this day.

Since that day, I've opened my mind enormously to the idea of watching children's cartoons. I, like many other fans, believe that cartoons are not necessarily reserved for children. Often, shows for kids portray more interesting themes than your average programme, as they're used as a vehicle to teach their young audience about the world; in other words, they are better

for representation in gender, race, and, nowadays, even sexual orientation. Children's cartoons seem to be the pioneers for equality in the media - presumably because they are tailored to teach children about non-discrimination. You therefore find more well-rounded characters and interesting plot lines in such shows. This, along with the fun silliness of a kids' show, makes it a winning combination for audiences of every age.

Of course, the range of awe-inspiring, beautiful art styles is also a factor. Cartoons are an extremely attractive form of media, providing freedom to draw just about anything you want. With animation, the imagination can run free; ideal not just for children, but for anyone with an open mind. So, in the end, being a cartoon fan - even if it is for kids - isn't too different to being an anime fan.

However - and this is a big however -

anime is mostly for all age groups. There are far fewer 'grown-up' cartoons in the west than there are 'grown-up' anime. Over here, we may get *Family Guy* and *Archer*, but in the anime world most of its content is for just about anyone who wants to watch it, regardless of age. For example, all the most popular anime like *Attack on Titan*, *Naruto*, or *One Piece* are not created specifically for children.

Children's cartoons, however, are primarily for children. Whether or not adults also like them. Generally, this doesn't present any problems, but, in certain areas of fandoms and communities, there are fans who take their enjoyment too far.

We've all had cartoon characters that we've fancied - I'm not sure I know anyone who didn't at some point fancy Kovu from *The Lion King 2*. And if you didn't think the Prince from *Anatasia* was hella fine, or that Princess Kida was stunning, you're part of the minority. That said, if you do love cartoons, as I do, and occasionally foster a crush for some of the characters, as I also do, then you must know that as adults, we share a responsibility in how we channel our love for cartoons. What I'm trying to say is, please don't put anything inappropriate on the Internet.

As I said, I've fancied cartoon characters before, from a young age to the point I'm at now, twenty-two years old. But, despite that, even if I really wanted to, I would never publish NSFW (not safe for work) fan art on the Internet. I'm not saying this to make myself seem like a moral guide on how to be a fan of cartoons. It just seems like the most sensible, reasonable thing to do. You know, not provide porn for children to easily find when they're looking up their favourite show.

One of my good friends, who was born and raised in Alaska, told me about a time when she and her friend had typed in the name of their favourite anime (I believe it was *Gundam Wing*) into the Internet, in its early days. They very quickly found an adult, erotic fan fiction. This friend told me how it had been hilarious, and actually opened up the idea of sexuality to them. They didn't understand a lot of it, though they read a chapter in turn through pure curiosity. *Gundam Wing* wasn't necessarily for kids, so this experience probably isn't comparable to what happens when a child types *My Little Pony* into Google. My friend looks back on the time with a lot of amusement, in fact. On the other hand, she remarks that "it can be really traumatic for a twelve-year-old to come across rape fiction... true story."

Can you imagine what it would be like as a six or seven-year-old child, typing My

WHEN LOVING A CHILDREN'S CARTOON CAN GO TOO FAR...



I found some inappropriate fan art of 14-year-old Katara on Google Images too.

Little Pony: Friendship is Magic, clicking onto Google Images, as one is wont to do, and finding... well, some of the stuff you find when you click Google Images. It's probably the most accessible way for someone to look at pictures on the Internet, and so when a kid wants to look at pictures of their favourite pony, say, and they find them hyper-sexualised, does that seem quite right? The second most accessible way to find a picture of a character on the Internet is probably Tumblr. And we all know where that goes.

I consider this a big issue, and also in some respects a feminist issue; it's unfortunately the case, through experience and research, that the majority of cartoon fans who produce such content are male, and a very particular kind of male. Now, going back to the example of *My Little Pony: Friendship is Magic*, the fandom is huge and varied. It's a really sweet show, with a largely lovely fanbase. However, it's also one of the main culprits of hyper-sexualising its characters, and putting pornographic content on the Internet for anyone to see. Not everyone knows how to block that sort of stuff when letting their children browse, so there really is a responsibility to not make NSFW stuff so blatant. Seeing what some of us find on Google Images, it's clear that some members of the fandom aren't trying hard enough to keep it restricted.

Fans of this type have been dubbed bronzies. I'm not aware of any such nicknames for other fandoms, which I think does go to show how bad the *My Little Pony*

community can get. Again, some bronzies are just blokes who like ponies, which is totally fine. But generally, this name has begun to define the more inappropriate fans. These are often not just fans who like the show, like to cosplay, to draw and write about *MLP*, but produce pornographic content - in the end, sexualising a show which is meant for children. And this, for me, crosses the boundary from innocent enjoyment of a programme or the odd crush, into something more damaging, verging on depraved.

Since the issue began to arise a few years ago, it has been cracked down on a lot. However, whilst writing this article, I (frighteningly easily) found some stuff that would be disturbing for a child to

stumble upon.

Every time a new cartoon comes out, I'm excited. I love animation. But my feelings are mixed with apprehension; what am I going to find next time I go on Tumblr? What are kids going to find? And when will the adult members of the community realise that they shouldn't produce hyper-sexualised content of its female characters?

Kids' cartoons aren't exclusively for children. But, as adult fans, we're responsible for what we do on the Internet. We must always remember that children are a large part of cartoon fanbases. And, we must remember, that no matter how much we like said cartoon, the show is not for us. It's for children.



Part of the humour of adult cartoons is that their art style makes them seem innocent, when they're not.



I Love Lucille

by Andrew Pollard

As we prepare for the return of our favourite zombie apocalypse survivors in **THE WALKING DEAD**, and following the cataclysmic cliffhanger of the Season Six, we ask: who will remain... and what will be left of them?





With the closing moments of *The Walking Dead*'s sixth season, longtime fans of the show and its comic book brethren were finally introduced to the baddest of the bad, the most hotly anticipated debut in the show's run, the man responsible for one of the most shocking moments in recent comic book history: Negan. Of course, the introduction of Jeffrey Dean Morgan's Negan was soon followed by a massive cliffhanger, and so now it's time to look at what lies ahead for Andrew Lincoln's in-over-his-head Rick Grimes and his crew.

Getting Up to Speed

We couldn't really start this Season Seven preview without addressing what's gone before, particularly *that* jaw-dropping, tension-drenched conclusion to the previous season. Negan, a rogue from the comic book *The Walking Dead* series that many have been waiting to see for years, finally made his bow... and boy did he make it in a big way. In the comic book realm, Negan famously made a huge splash in *The Walking Dead* #100 when he used Lucille – the name lovingly given to his barbed-wire baseball bat – to brutalise and beat a longtime favourite character to their bloody death. And from here on out, we're going to veer slightly into comic book **spoiler territory** from the next paragraph onwards... so don't say you've not been warned (and in fairness, we're talking about something that came out back in 2012!).

Hopefully you're still with us, and this is where we get to discuss the juicy stuff. You see, in the monumental one hundredth edition of *The Walking Dead*, newcomer Negan showed how much of a thorough

bastard he was by pummeling fan-favourite Glenn Rhee to death courtesy of Lucille getting up close and personal with poor Glenn's face. This moment was then recreated during the final moments of the Season Six finale, with a POV shot showing *someone* being brutally beaten to their apparent death, but it's yet to be revealed just who the doomed soul actually is. Present at the scene were Rick, Carl, Daryl, Michonne, Glenn, Maggie, Abraham, Eugene, Sasha, Rosita, and Aaron. But will the TV show play out like the comic book did? To those who have both read the books and watched the

show, they know that just because Glenn bit the bullet in the comics doesn't mean he'll automatically be the one doing the same in the show. After all, the TV series hasn't been afraid to differ from the source material at various points, such as when it killed off Dale far earlier than his comic book counterpart, how they made the bold move to kill off Andrea in Season Three despite the longstanding character still being alive and well to this very day in the comic book world, how they've created fresh characters purely for TV (hey there, Daryl Dixon!).

Eeny, Meeny, Miny, Moe...

Just who Negan *did* kill at the end of Season six certainly prompted plenty of speculation, but it also caused a whole lot of anger amongst certain quarters of the fanbase. That anger was directed at the minds behind the show for the way in which they decided to end the season on such a massive cliffhanger, leaving fans to wait six months until they get some sort of clarity on this whole situation. So irked were some fans, that online petitions and threats to boycott the show surfaced online... because everyone's a keyboard warrior these days. Granted, the wait for resolution has been a long and painful one, but does the instant-reward and instant-access generation of today really have such unbearable disdain for actually drawing something out and *not* having the answer to a question given before the question was even asked? Everything is wanted yesterday these days, but to some of us *The Walking Dead* made a bold move in going with such a lengthy cliffhanger. Then again, creator Robert Kirkman has already moved to say that maybe doing such a massive, open-ended season finale was a mistake in hindsight.

Regardless, an answer is on the cards when the show returns in October; until then, we're left with nothing more than speculation and intense fan theories.





Logic dictates that the person who Negan kills in the show won't be either Carl or Rick, a) because Negan promised to take out Carl's eye if anybody moves, and b) because Negan promised to feed said eye to Rick. Other than those two, all bets are off. Will the show follow its comic book roots and finally kill off Glenn after teasing his death midway through Season Six (and frustrating many fans by having him miraculously survive what seemed a nailed-on demise)? With Daryl being a wildcard in how he's not even in the comics, will this troubled fan-favourite meet his maker? Will it be, as many fans speculate, Abraham Ford and his magnificent bastard of a moustache who gets offed? Just as upsetting, could poor Eugene and his glorious mullet be for the chop? Or could, and this would be a majorly controversial move, the show go as far as killing off the pregnant Maggie? Then there's the other supporting players to take in to consideration, but let's face it, there's only really Michonne, Glenn, Daryl or Maggie who are A-listers out of the potential victims of Negan's attack. With how we haven't really lost a big name character for a while, the show would certainly be accused of losing its balls if all of this intrigue, wait and tension resulted in someone like Rosita or Aaron dying. Hell, you could even accuse the show of bottling it if Abraham (who, in fairness, does seem the most likely) or Eugene were the ones left dead at Negan's hands. As for Glenn, even if the show finally *did* kill

off this character who has been with the series since the very first episode, it would almost leave a bad taste in the mouth of many after the show soured numerous fans in how it handled his faux death last season. Still, make no mistake about it, the series is due a big death, and anything but that will feel like a letdown and a cop out.

New Horizons

Amidst rumours that all eleven potential victims of Negan's have filmed death scenes in order to keep fans guessing and to keep the show's options open – which we're going out on a limb now to say is total bollocks – the only thing for certain is that the landscape of *The Walking Dead* is to undergo some major changes when the series returns later this year.

For the first time in its run – which incidentally is about two years of real time – Andrew Lincoln's Rick Grimes is truly helpless with no feasible way out of the situation that he finds he and the rest of his group in. This is a Rick who has been so cocksure, so confident, so comfortable, so 'us against the world' for so long now that he simply froze on the spot upon the realisation that the world he was fighting against just got a whole lot darker. And obviously the King of Darkness in this equation is Negan, a wrong 'un of the highest order. Regardless of who dies in the season opener, and let's just presume that it isn't Rick, that means that the dynamic of the show will

change as well. For so long, Rick Grimes has been the person who so many look to for inspiration, for guidance, and to get the job done regardless of how dirty that job may be. What happens now when that figurehead has failed on the biggest stage, with one of his closest allies being brutally beaten to death in front of everyone's very eyes? Apart from that *other* question, this is the big question that lies ahead for the show and is something that will dominate this upcoming season.

But whilst it appears all doom and gloom for now, there are some bright spots of hope on the horizon for *The Walking Dead*. And one such spot of hope is Ezekiel. A character pulled straight from the comics, this ally of Rick and co.'s will be played by Khary Payton, someone likely best known to genre fans for lending his vocals to a whole host of animated DC offerings over the years. Ezekiel is the leader of a community known as The Kingdom, and even cooler is that this charming soul has his own pet tiger named Shiva. In an interesting twist, it's been confirmed that we've already seen some members of The Kingdom in the show, with Morgan and Carol having previously bumped into them. Comic book-wise, Ezekiel actually ends up getting all hot and heavy over Michonne, although, given how Danai Gurira's katana-wielding badass has been bumping uglies with Rick in the show, it remains to be seen whether that element of the character will be present when the leader of The





Kingdom makes his mark in the TV series. As for *The Kingdom* itself, this will be a community that will come together with Rick's ragtag bunch of Alexandria survivors and Gregory's Hilltop to form an alliance to battle Negan and his Saviors. For Alexandria, though, things don't look all that great, with The Saviors soon to target the once-safe community that so many called home last season.

Elsewhere, *The Walking Dead* finds itself with its largest cast to date as its seventh season approaches. With Jeffrey Dean Morgan's Negan, Austin Amelio's Dwight (who has a major, major part to play in future proceedings...), Tom Payne's Jesus, and Xander Berkeley's Gregory all promoted to series regulars for Season Seven, it means the show currently has twenty talents signed to 'regular' contracts. Of course, we know that one of those won't be making it past the upcoming season's first episode, but it still gives an idea of the scale and scope of what lies ahead for this ever-expanding series. *The Walking Dead* is bigger than ever, both in terms of what the show has to offer and, more importantly to AMC, in ratings, with the Season 6 finale drawing in a whopping 18.6 million viewers in the US alone. Whilst the show may stumble and shuffle at times, it's certainly not in any danger of taking its final breath any time soon.

The Walking Dead's seventh season débuts on October 24th on FOX UK.



REBEL YELL

by Chris Haydon

Known as a juggernaut in the cinema, the STAR WARS Universe doesn't do too badly on the small screen, as we find out as DISNEY XD's REBELS thunders into its third season.



A long time ago, in a galaxy, far, far away... well, actually only four years ago in San Francisco, one of the most groundbreaking deals was initiated. Hands were shook between executives at Lucasfilm Ltd and The Walt Disney Company at the dramatic valuation of \$4.06 billion, and the legendary production company founded by George Lucas suddenly belonged to 'The House of Mouse'.

The Walt Disney Company now owned the studio known best for creating and producing the biggest and most beloved franchise in not only film history, but indeed popular cultural history: *Star Wars*. Suffice to say, many of the millions and millions of fans were terrified at the prospect that Lucas and his management team had quite literally made a deal with the Dark Side.

But fast forward to present day and *Star Wars* is enjoying the largest, most prosperous era of its lifetime. For the first time ever, a new feature film is slated for annual release through to 2020; be that saga episodes or singular outings such as this year's hugely anticipated *Rogue One: A Star Wars Story*. Leading events like *Star Wars Celebration* are selling out venues in break-neck fashion, accumulating millions of dollars in revenue, merchandise is flying from

shelves at an all-time high globally, and new, original content is being ushered in by Lucasfilm creatives at unfathomable speed across all media outlets.

It is safe to say that Walt Disney have not poisoned Star Wars like so many feared; they have reinvented it, and are reaping the biblical benefits accordingly. It's no wonder then that Disney chief executive Bob Iger went on the record to say they have "...struck more than gold..." at the European premiere of J. J. Abrams' masterful *Star Wars: The Force Awakens* last year (the third highest-grossing film in box office history, earning a staggering \$2,068,178,225 worldwide). Walt Disney now enjoy a monopoly on some of the most powerful production brands on the planet - including Marvel Entertainment, Pixar Animation Studios and Touchstone Pictures - but nothing right now can compare to *Star Wars*. It is a truly unstoppable Force...

One of the many subsidiaries under Disney's never-ending umbrella is their small screen unit Walt Disney Television, which provides a plethora of original programming across a variety of network and cable channels. However, one of its most popular home entertainment sources is actually one of its newest: Disney XD. Aimed primarily at the teenage market, Disney XD launched in 2009 and offers more mature viewing than the majority of its sister stations. It is responsible for some of the company's most celebrated modern hits such as *Phineas and Ferb*, *Gravity Falls*, and *Tron: Uprising*. But the channel's strongest offerings are ones that combine and complement branding from the production companies owned by the big bosses upstairs, and Disney XD's definitive programme is none other than *Star Wars Rebels*.

The 3D computer-generated series, produced by Lucasfilm Animation, is set fourteen years after *Star Wars: Episode III - Revenge of the Sith* and five years before *Star Wars: Episode VI - A New Hope*, making it a firm member of the remarkably enlarged *Star Wars* Expanded Universe (SWEU). Co-created and executively produced by *Star Wars: The Clone Wars* visionary Dave Filoni, *Star Wars Rebels* takes place during an era when the dreaded Galactic Empire is securing its grip on the galaxy. Imperial forces are ferociously on the hunt for the last remaining Jedi Knights and will stop at nothing until the Light Side is well and truly eradicated. But with all dictatorships, there are those who refuse to conform, who choose to stand and fight, not kneel and accept fate. These brave few make up the fledgling rebellion against the Empire, and it is these heroes who we voyage beside.

Star Wars Rebels first exploded onto Disney XD on October 3rd two years

ago, and since then it has rapidly become one of the franchise's most successful and celebrated offerings, spawning a cavalcade of promotional tie-ins and attracting a mass of A-list voice performers. But textually and thematically, the show's firmest strengths lie in its storytelling. We see the infinite complexities of the galaxy and its rule through the eyes of young Ezra Bridger (played immaculately by Taylor Gray). Born on Empire Day, he is a headstrong and independent teen con-artist who scales the streets of Lothal, searching for his next pay cheque. Ezra - an orphan of war - soon joins the rebel crew of the *Ghost*, a starship piloted by Captain Hera Syndulla (a note-perfect Vanessa Marshall).

Here, Ezra begins training under the watchful eye of Kanan Jarrus (voiced by Hollywood icon Freddie Prinze Jr.), a Force-sensitive Jedi Knight who survived Order 66. He quickly begins to realise that he too has a connection with the Force, and that perhaps the fast-paced lifestyle of a pickpocket was not his calling after all, rather he is destined for something far greater. Throughout the first season, our focus remains firmly on Ezra's journey from street-sleuth to Jedi Padawan, and the intergalactic adventures of those onboard the *Ghost* including Herra, Kanan, Mandalorian weapons specialist Sabine Wren (the wonderful Tiya Sircar), Lasat rebel and former Lasan Honor Guard Zeb Orrelios (played with snarling brilliance by Steven Blum), and the team's loyal but often unreliable droid 'Chopper'.

But unlike most 22-minute animated shows, *Star Wars Rebels* does not abide to traditional episodic law. Our characters aren't just thrown into another mission and potential threat with each passing week; instead, time is taken to render character, further progress story arcs, and flesh out the SWEU, supporting the many fellow projects circling in orbit. No less than director Gareth Edwards' forthcoming *Rogue One*, which sits narratively next door to Filoni and co-creator Simon Kinberg's digital animation. This particular film takes its principal story from *A New Hope*'s mysterious and widely debated opening crawl. As for *Star Wars Rebels*, well sure, being onboard an active vessel means our destinations change, and with that, new voyages are a regularity, but the show makes a conscious effort to give its crew - both Rebellion and Imperial - the chance to develop.

And it has paid off, because now we are ready to welcome the third season, and things are about to get extremely interesting. The dramatic climax of Season Two left the fate of a number of characters in the balance, particularly that of Ahsoka Tano (the enigmatic Ashley Eckstein), the Jedi heroine of the Clone Wars who thrived under the





tutelage of Anakin Skywalker, only to see his true nature bloom as he became the most fearsome villain in the stratosphere: Sith Lord Darth Vader. Both master and student faced off in the impeccable two-part finale *Twilight of the Apprentice*, whilst Ezra began struggling with a conflict of interest at the hands of failed but emotionally manipulative Sith apprentice Darth Maul (franchise veteran Sam Witwer). He is a villain who has tasted the unquenchable thirst of power, but has never been able to retain it. Possession of such control is quick to evade him, and now he is selfishly attempting to further his work through a younger, more powerful Padawan.

As we press onwards to Season Three, which will premiere during autumn 2016 with the extended episode *Steps into Shadow* (which this writer viewed at *Star Wars Celebration Europe*, and can say with assurance that it is sublime), nothing is a certainty for the *Ghost* crew, and indeed the audience. Whilst it looked as though Ahsoka's exit during the Season Two finale was indeed final, Filoni has teased that perhaps our favourite SWEU character is actually just on a temporary hiatus.

During the Season Three roundtable at London's ExCel Exhibition Centre in July, Filoni stated that he was overwhelmed by the fans' reaction to Ahsoka's journey, which made him reconsider her story path, albeit in his signature Lucasfilm cryptic manner. *"Ahsoka's return just might be possible. It doesn't necessarily mean what some of us would hope it means, but it might be possible to see her again. She might have something to do,"* he said coyly.

It isn't surprising then that this writer, and likely many fellow *Star Wars Rebels* viewers, have the inkling that Ahsoka might make a cameo appearance in *Rogue One*. After all, it was officially confirmed at the film's panel that Darth Vader will feature in Edward's interspace heist-thriller, so perhaps the almighty battle which concluded last season was actually only a portion, and the real war is yet to come.

Meanwhile, far deeper routes are being dug for Ezra - now a fully-fledged young adult and a seriously impressive Jedi - who is straddling the complexities of maturing in this dangerous landscape, as well as honing his abilities. More curious than cautious, he is starting to feel as though there are boundaries surrounding him; ones that could be broken and explored, much to Kanan's terror. Ezra's tonal shades are coloured with conflict; he is good, both in nature and skill, but he believes he can be great. The trouble is, at what cost does greatness come? What will he have to sacrifice in order to achieve it? What will he become?

He, like many others on board, is having to adjust. Kanan is living proof of such alteration. *"Battles leave scars,"* he quietly calls in the tremendous trailer. *"Some you can't see"*. Following his brutal encounter with Darth Maul, he is now blind, and is going to have to learn how to *really* see. Not through his fellow primary senses, but through the Force. A Jedi Knight and survivor of Order 66 he may be, but this will be his greatest, most arduous test. Sabine too is not only extending her affections for neon colours and high explosives in the upcoming season; she is also coming to terms with her rich Mandalorian heritage.

After bruising confrontations with her people during the second season as the rebel crew attempted to seek mutual allies in Mandalore, it became quickly clear that although she sports the armour, vigour and deathly combat abilities, she is far from the bounty hunter stereotype that is associated with her people. Still, as brilliantly teased in the first trailer, there is much more to Sabine than a head of attention-grabbing hair. She can briefly be seen drawing the Darksaber - the ancient black-bladed lightsaber which was formerly wielded by Pre Vizsla during the Clone Wars - only to be stolen by Darth Maul who used it as a vital tool when leading the Death Watch.

But personal issues and changes aside, the *Ghost* crew have far bigger worries to deal with than states of identity crisis because Season Three is providing a truly merciless and menacing central foe. This particular nemesis has become a pride piece for a plethora of *Star Wars* fans worldwide, yet he has never taken a physical form... until now. Whilst for some this could be deemed concerning, it is important to remember that *Star Wars Rebels* has maintained a level of excellence when welcoming characters from the SWEU, and indeed the trilogy films, into the animated format. Much like with *Star Wars: The Clone Wars*, Filoni and his creative teams are extremely attentive not only to visual detail, but also to lore, ensuring these additions - no matter how small or large - are treated in the way fans want and, at this stage, expect.

Promising to 'pull the rebels apart, piece by piece' and making them 'the architects of their own destruction', it is safe to say this Imperial is keen to reset the balance back into the Empire's favour, but who exactly is he? Well, he is none other than Grand Admiral Thrawn. Now officially canon, the unveiling of the blue-skinned, red-eyed Chiss supervillain at the *Star Wars Rebels* Season Three panel set London's ExCel alight. An intoxicating wave of cheers and applause spanned the Celebration Stage auditorium, with thousands on their feet in admiration. It is safe to say that we have been patiently awaiting

the screen arrival of Thrawn for many years, and in 2016, the fans' prayers have finally been answered.

Created by American author Timothy Zahn, Grand Admiral Thrawn started life on the page in his now-beloved Thrawn Trilogy, consisting of *Heir to the Empire* (1991), *Dark Force Rising* (1992), and *The Last Command* (1993). He is one of the few Imperials who favours strategy and pragmatism over brute force and violence. Thrawn is able to manipulate and control those in his crosshairs by understanding them, and consequently exploiting their weaknesses. "To defeat an enemy, you must know them. Not simply their battle tactics, but their history, philosophy, art," he beckons with sinister delight. But the arrival of Thrawn in *Star Wars Rebels* isn't an end product for the character, rather his rebirth.

During the panel, a video transmission played from Zahn's home in Chicago, Illinois where he is hard at work writing a new novel about the character, simply titled *Thrawn*, which will be on sale from April 2017 - just in time for *Star Wars Celebration Orlando* next year.

In Disney XD's smash the character hit, will be voiced by Danish actor Lars Mikkelsen, best known for his work in BBC's *Sherlock* and Netflix's *House of Cards*. He is the elder brother of Mads Mikkelsen who interestingly makes his *Star Wars* debut this year too, portraying Jyn's (Felicity Jones) father Galen Erso in *Rogue One*. But Mikkelsen isn't the only major new addition to the third season; in fact, Filoni spanned the galaxy and beyond to attain the only performer he knew must play the mysterious one they call The Bendu.

Also making his first appearance in *Steps into Shadow*, The Bendu is a Force-sensitive being in some respects, but really serves as a metaphor for what is bound to render all those involved: choice. Ezra - now transfixed by the notion of becoming more powerful - must choose the Light or the Dark, Kanan - now blinded and unable to instill discipline in his apprentice - must decide what path he intends to venture, and Sabine - now unearthing the secrets of her people - must opt for a place to call home. The Bendu is stationed firmly between the Light Side and the Dark Side, a primary piece at the centre of the Force, and he is given life on-screen by one of Britain's most cherished performers: Tom Baker.

The iconic and definitive Gallifreyan time-traveller, Baker is best known for his role as the Fourth Doctor in science fiction royalty *Doctor Who* from 1974 to 1981, but in more recent years, he has become a signature voice that's instantly recognisable across the globe. Filoni joked during the panel that he and his wife took Baker for lunch whilst visiting London in 2015, only to nearly lose her to the Brit's infinite charm and

classy cool. The Bendu is an infinitely wise presence, who provides insightful monologues on the notions of the Force and how it affects those it touches. His primary involvement in the first episode is to guide Kanan through his transitional periods as he adjusts to losing his vision.

But Season Three isn't just about the new characters, nor indeed master, apprentice and Mandalorian. Captain Hera looks set to continue her patchy relationship with father Cham who has been strained and temperamental since her departure from homeworld Ryloth, and she is coming to terms with Kanan's blindness from the battle at Malachor. Plus the agonising weight of Ahsoka's assumed demise rests firmly on her shoulders. And as for Zeb - the last of his kind and still haunted by the savage extermination of his people - he'll have to step up to be more than muscle if the *Ghost* crew are to withstand the intellectual warfare curated by the formidable Thrawn.

As the show ages, its tone begins to alter too, instilling a more prominent sense of unease, tension and tribulation, and this season is destined to explore it all. And indeed, with each passing season, the aesthetic quality continues to further also. From the opening hour and the band of clips viewed, the level of visual progression is quite frankly remarkable. One particular sequence involving a prolonged jetpack flight chase with Empire-serving Mandalorians and Ezra, who fearlessly swings his lime-green lightsaber whilst clinging to Sabine for dear life, is as dramatic and spectacular as it sounds. *Star Wars Rebels* is unquestionably one of the small screen's most dynamic and stirring digital offerings, and a real effort has been made to give the crew, the landscapes, the sets, and the colour pallets a true sense of authenticity. Season Three demands to be viewed on Disney XD's high-definition service, that's for sure.

Star Wars Rebels Season Three arrives at quite possibly the perfect time, too. As we near ever-closer to the unveiling of *Rogue One*, the new batch of episodes will provide both your required *Star Wars* fix as you patiently play the waiting game, as well as offer insight into what sparked Jyn Erso and her fellow rebels into undertaking the surely impossible challenge of stealing the technical plans for the Death Star.

But most importantly, showrunner Filoni has promised that his characters will not only begin to appear in the live-action pictures, but also influence their progression. If he has made good on his word already, you'll need Season Three in your life to attain the truest experience of Edwards' must-see story.

★
STAR WARS REBELS SEASON THREE
airs on Disney XD from September 24th.



THE FUTURE OF SIN

BY JOHN HIGGINS



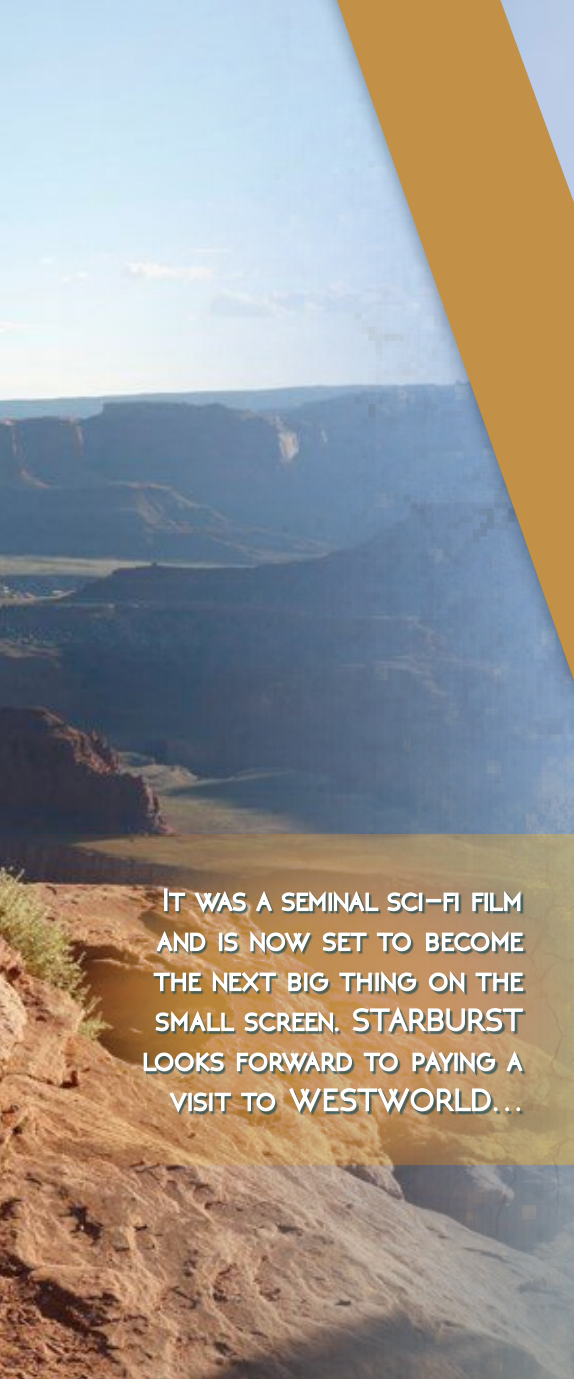
Two years before *Jaws* ushered in the summer blockbuster, and two decades before the bestselling book *Jurassic Park* was adapted to become the very first benchmark for digital technology in entertainment, Michael Crichton's 1973 big-screen version of his own novel *Westworld* arrived on cinema screens to critical acclaim and high audience appreciation.

Starring James Brolin and Richard Benjamin, it was Yul Brynner who became the film's poster boy portraying an evil variant of his hero Chris from the 1960 classic *The Magnificent Seven*. *Westworld* was a stirring mix of high concept and sci-fi in which tourists visited three theme parks - Medievalworld, Romanworld, and the titular Westworld - to live out their fantasies and ambitions through roleplay with robots. Inevitably, glitches start to occur and Brynner's robot gunslinger goes out of

control, pursuing Benjamin and Brolin.

Westworld, in its original incarnation, belongs with a number of key sci-fi offerings in the 1970s (alongside *Silent Running*, *Rollerball*, and *Logan's Run*) that came before *Star Wars*, which have all endured thanks to their specific vistas and being from a time when there was a crisp, clean and pure vision of the futuristic world. For all that, it remains one of the most iconic offerings of the decade and a great example of compact, worthy storytelling.

Over four decades since the release of the film (which also spawned a 1976 sequel called *Futureworld*, which starred Peter Fonda and Blythe Danner), it was only a matter of time before contemporary TV would give the concept a reboot and a revamp - and from first impressions, it looks like being one of the shows to watch when it makes its debut



IT WAS A SEMINAL SCI-FI FILM AND IS NOW SET TO BECOME THE NEXT BIG THING ON THE SMALL SCREEN. STARBURST LOOKS FORWARD TO PAYING A VISIT TO WESTWORLD...

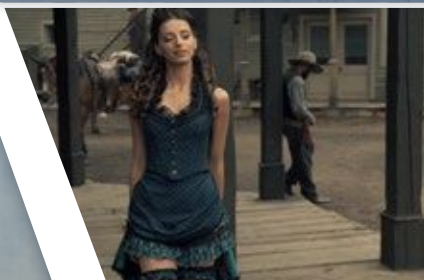


in October on HBO in the USA and Sky Atlantic in the UK.

From what we've seen so far, it certainly has the potential to become one of the must-watch shows. It has a great chance to surpass expectations, much in the way *Battlestar Galactica* transcended the late Glen Larsen's original concept, being a sci-fi metaphor for a post-9/11 world. As co-executive producer Jonathan Nolan has stated numerous times, the world has moved on.

Nolan certainly knows a thing or two and appears to be the right choice to supervise this ten-episode series debut, given his collaboration with older brother Christopher on the Dark Knight Trilogy. Somebody else who knows a thing or two about reboots and high concept television is another executive producer of *Westworld*, J. J. Abrams, who has written episodes of





the new show, and whose credits more than speak for themselves with the likes of *Alias*, *Lost*, *Star Wars*, and *Star Trek* amongst his successes.

The cast certainly provides a tantalising mix to the action and drama. With Anthony Hopkins, Ed Harris, Evan Rachel Wood, Thandie Newton, and James Marsden leading the hunt and pack, there is clearly a determined air to make this the must-watch series of the autumn.

First impressions suggest a broader canvas and a far slicker and grounded world than we witnessed all those years ago, with the official word proclaiming that this new *Westworld* is 'a dark odyssey about the dawn of artificial consciousness and the evolution of sin'. The makers also stress that this new series is 'inspired' by the story, rather than just an attempt to rebadge its own vision of Crichton's successful work.

The series was first ordered in November 2014 and originally was scheduled for a 2015 premiere date. However, in an unusual move, the production temporarily shut down at the start of this year so that the writing could be updated.

Interestingly, according to a report in September 2015, the US Acting Guild, SAG-AFTRA, notified members of an option to 'withdraw from scenes requiring nudity' or participation in 'graphic sexual situations'. This gave the impression that we could be in for *Game of Thrones* levels of explicit content from the show. However, HBO

moved quickly to dispel such concerns, making a statement: "The document that the background actors were given was created by an outside extra casting vendor. It was not requested, written or approved by HBO, Warner Bros Television, or the producers, and contains situations that we do not require of any actor. We are rectifying immediately the discrepancies in this vendor's document with our actual on-set practices, which provide a professional and comfortable working environment for all performers." On the plus side, the show got a very nice \$12 million tax credit by the California Film Commission.

Anthony Hopkins plays Dr Robert Ford, the creative director of Westworld, while Thandie Newton plays Maeve Millay, the resort's resident Madame. Ed Harris appears to be fulfilling the role of antagonist previously occupied by Yul Brynner with his character, the Man in Black.

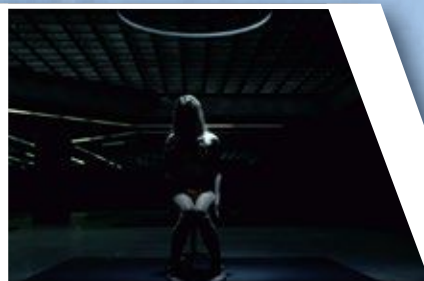
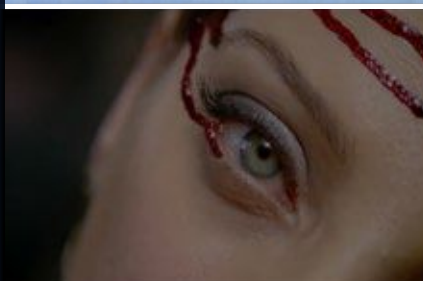
One evident change the show appears to be utilising and hopefully expanding on is the obvious advancement in technology since the release of the original film. Whereas games like Pong (a very simplified version of tennis - ask your parents) were the zenith of video games back then, now the gaming industry has become a far bigger animal and, to some extent, a monster needing to be fed, with games now often eclipsing movies in terms of popularity with certain demographics. Perhaps this is one of the elements of the show that will parallel the reality of the world.

Nolan also commented recently that the new reboot would tap into primal desires, although that appeared to be a key theme back in 1973. Like all the best high-concept entertainment, *Westworld* does seem to be striving to take audiences and fans alike into a place they only dare to dream of going in the manner of classic structured drama. The violent aspect of the show is also something that Executive Producer Lisa Joy stated recently would be less about the fetishisation of the act, rather more about exploring the crime with dignity and depth.

Overall, in its current incarnation, *Westworld* represents an overwhelming and renewed desire to pursue what legendary screenwriter William Goldman described as past magic. We don't discourage any old idea to be expressed creatively in a new way at STARBURST, merely to think a little more originally and to generate creative opportunities that outline the evident talent of people like J. J. Abrams and Jonathan Nolan, who have both clearly earned their stripes producing first-rate programming.

We are certainly awaiting the result of *Westworld* in its reboot and from what we have seen, there is a lot of potential that the new show will excel when unleashed in October. That said, it is also a poignant reminder of what a key figure Michael Crichton was in the science fiction and fantasy world; we're forever thankful for what he created in his career, and he's still truly missed.

Take a trip to the hedonistic delights of *WESTWORLD* when the series starts on Sky Atlantic in October.





SUBSPACE RELAY

ALL THE NEWS
FROM THE
WORLDS OF
STAR TREK
WITH IAIN
ROBERTSON



Discovering More about DISCOVERY

As we get closer to January, details are starting to flow now about the upcoming **Star Trek: Discovery**, with showrunner Bryan Fuller finally starting to dish the dirt on the series.

Confirming that, as we reported last month, the series is indeed set between **Enterprise** and the **Original Series**, Fuller announced it takes place ten years prior to Kirk and co.'s five-year mission, and that 'there's an incident, an event, in the history of Starfleet that has been talked about (in previous **Star Trek** shows), but never fully explored' that will be central to the series. Whilst he wouldn't elaborate further, he did confirm that it wouldn't be the Romulan war or Battle of Axanar.

Most intriguingly was that the central character in the series wouldn't be the ship's captain, but somewhat mysteriously, a female 'Lieutenant Commander, with caveats'. And, in a tribute to Trek's origins, she'll initially be referred to simply as 'Number One', the same as Majel Barrett's unnamed First Officer in **The Cage**. Fuller added that they were hoping to cast a non-white actress in the role.

"We've seen six series from the captain's point of view," Fuller said. "In order to understand something that is so completely alien from her, she must first understand herself. That's part of our journey on this planet, to get along, and that's part of our journey in this first season."

Fuller didn't divulge many details regarding the rest of the crew, besides saying that, as per tradition there'll be 'around seven' primary cast members (one of whom is rumoured to be called Saru). Following in **Beyond's** footsteps, at least one crew member will be openly gay. There'll be more (and more elaborate) aliens than we've seen before, and robots will feature in some form! Expect casting announcements around October time.

Fuller also tweeted a make up test from the show, which seemed to show part of an alien with Andorian-style antennae (then again, he's also recently tweeted that the **Discovery's** theme tune will be Shatner's version of *Rocket Man*, so he may just be winding us all up).

The pilot episode has been written by Fuller and Executive Producer Alex Kurtzman. **Wrath of Khan** director Nicholas Meyer has written the second episode. Gretchen Berg and Aaron Harberts, both of whom worked with Fuller on **Pushing Daisies**, have joined as co-showrunners, and two other writers - Jesse Alexander and Kemp Powers - have also joined the show.

Anyone holding out hope that the thirteen-episode first season

might eventually lead to **Trek's** traditional, longer seasons is likely to be disappointed, as Fuller revealed that the first season may well be the longest they do. Later seasons are likely to be around the ten-episode mark, partly due to the complexity of episodes, and partly because of Fuller pulling double duty overseeing both **Discovery** and the upcoming **American Gods**.

In various other titbits, Fuller's revealed that the look of the **Discovery** is indeed partly inspired by Ralph McQuarrie's unused designs from the 1970s, that Section 31 may feature in some form, and that classic characters such as Amanda Grayson as well as crew members from the **Original Series** could appear at some point.

Is it January yet?

The Best and Worst Episodes – Vegas Style

With over seven hundred to choose from, selecting both the ten best and worst **Trek** episodes is no easy task, but that's what fans attempted at the recent 50th anniversary convention in Las Vegas. With mixed results. This is the same convention that three years ago famously voted **Into Darkness** the worst movie, promoting harsh comments from both Roberto Orci and Simon Pegg. Whilst the 10 best list quite correctly puts **City on The Edge of Forever** on top, and includes the likes of classics like **Yesterday's Enterprise** and **The Visitor**, there are a couple of unusual choices. **Enterprise's** mirror universe two-parter **In a Mirror, Darkly** is fun, but it's hardly top 10 material, and not even as good as the two original episodes that inspired it: **Mirror, Mirror** and **The Tholian Web**. Likewise, **The Magnificent Ferengi** is entertaining fluff, but top ten? Maybe it's the sight of Iggy Pop as a Vorta which won the crowd over.

As for the ten worst, there are few surprises, with 'classics' such as **Threshold** (Tom Paris & Janeway turn into lizards and have lizard babies!), **Turnabout Intruder** (Kirk's body gets possessed by a woman, '60s sexism ensues) and the little-bit-racist-if-we're-being-perfectly-honest **Code Of Honor** all present and correct. **Enterprise's** finale **These are the Voyages** was a surprise choice for the top spot though. Whilst certainly a stinker, ranking any other episode top of a list in a universe where **TNG's** notorious clip show **Shades of Gray** exists is frankly, just wrong.

The 10 best:

1. **The City On The Edge Of Forever (TOS)**
2. **In The Pale Moonlight (DS9)**
3. **The Inner Light (TNG)**
4. **Amok Time (TOS)**
5. **Yesterday's Enterprise (TNG)**
6. **The Visitor (DS9)**
7. **Chain Of Command (TNG)**
8. **Balance Of Terror (TOS)**
9. **In A Mirror, Darkly (ENT)**
10. **The Magnificent Ferengi (DS9)**

The 10 worst:

1. **These Are The Voyages (ENT)**
2. **Code Of Honor (TNG)**
3. **Threshold (VOY)**
4. **Turnabout Intruder (TOS)**
5. **Shades Of Gray (TNG)**
6. **Sub Rosa (TNG)**
7. **And The Children Shall Lead (TOS)**
8. **Move Along Home (DS9)**
9. **The Alternative Factor (TOS)**
10. **Precious Cargo (ENT)**

BEYOND Penantic

If, like us, you're overly pedantic and don't get out enough, one aspect of **Star Trek Beyond** may have left you slightly baffled (other than Simon Pegg's accent, obviously). The U.S.S. Franklin, which the crew commandeers after they're stranded on Altamid, is described as the first Earth ship capable of reaching warp four. And yet its registry number – NX-326 – would seem to place it as being a successor to Archer's Enterprise (NX-01), which of course was the first warp five ship. To further complicate matters, it's described as having disappeared sometime in the early 2160s, around a decade after **Enterprise** was set.

Whilst this may seem like an error, one of **Beyond**'s editors, Dylan Highsmith, provided an explanation:

"It was an M.A.C.O. ship (or a United Earth Starfleet ship that housed M.A.C.O. personnel at times) that predates the NX-01. When the UFP Starfleet is formed, M.A.C.O. was disbanded and the ship was reclassified as a Starfleet ship. The ship is then 'lost' in the early 2160s. It was important to everyone that the ship, like Edison, predate the Federation; that thematically, the ship mirrored an earlier time in history and served as a bridge in design between then and the NX-01."

In reality, the registry number was another of the film's tributes to the late Leonard Nimoy, whose birthday was March 26th. As well as having a kick-ass music collection, the ship was a dual tribute, with director Justin Lin naming it after his grandfather.

BEYOND Box Office

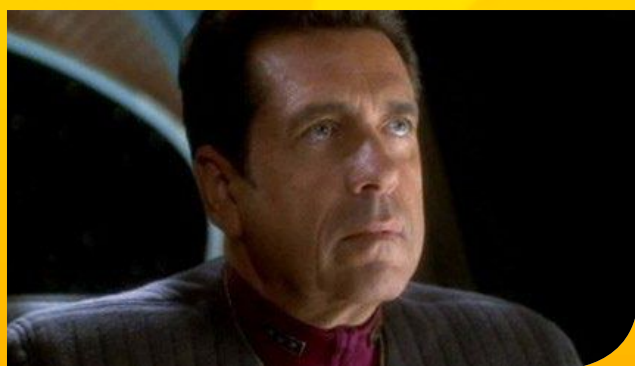
Despite generally positive reviews, **Star Trek Beyond** has struggled to make much of an impression at the box office. In the U.S., it looks like ending up around \$160 million, down considerably on the \$257 and \$228 million of the previous two instalments. It's performed a little better worldwide, surpassing 2009's **Trek** total, and it's just opened strongly in China, taking over \$30 million in its first weekend. However, it's looking like it will end up grossing considerably less than **Into Darkness**' \$467 million worldwide total.

Considering it's the franchise's 50th anniversary, Paramount will have been hoping for considerably higher takings, especially in the U.S. The fourth Kelvin universe film (featuring the return of Chris Hemsworth's George Kirk) is still on track, although don't be surprised if its budget is considerably lower than the \$185 million Paramount spend on **Beyond**. It's especially disappointing for us as our '**Star Trek** performs '**Beyond**' Paramount's expectations' heading for this story will now, tragically, remain unused.

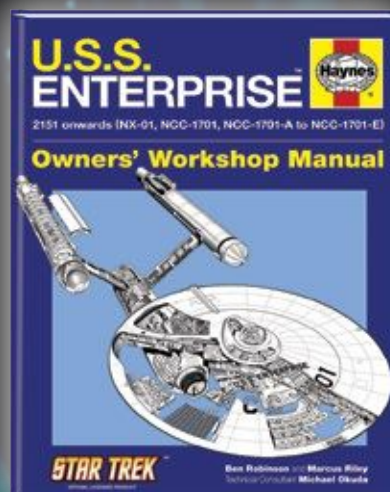
R.I.P. Barry Jenner

Barry Jenner, known to **Trek** fans as **Deep Space Nine**'s Admiral Ross, died on August 9th. He was 75. Debuting in the Season Six opener **A Time to Stand**, Jenner appeared as Admiral Ross a dozen times throughout the show's final two seasons, including the series finale **What You Leave Behind**. Originally cast for a one-off appearance, Jenner's performance quickly saw him become a recurring character, clocking in the second most appearances of any of **Trek**'s numerous Admirals (beaten only by **Enterprise**'s Admiral Forrest).

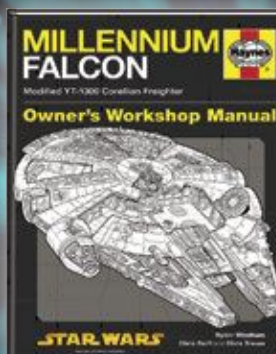
Besides being a popular figure on the convention circuit, Jenner appeared in numerous shows, including **Dallas**, **JAG** and **V**. He was also a reserve officer in the Los Angeles police for twenty-one years.



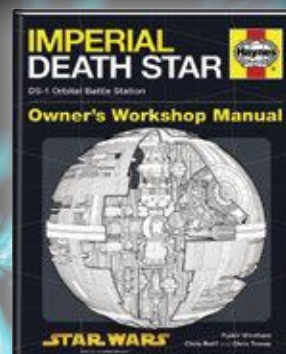
A UNIVERSE OF INFORMATION



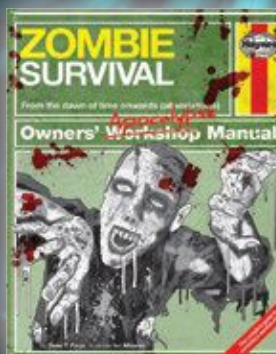
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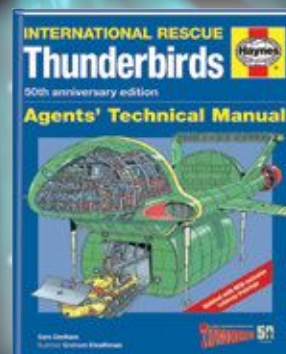
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THE TREKOLOGIST

From the desk
of The Horror
Channel's new
Trekologist
B. JONES



Scotty, Geordi and Kes have one thing in common -
Star Trek ignored them...

Greetings from the hub of Trekkdom. As I sit in my tiny spacecraft hovering nearly three feet from the ground, I'm struck by just how little certain characters in the *Star Trek* universe have been developed. We all know that Kirk had rivalries in the academy, about his affairs and his interest in reading old books. We know that Data had a pet cat, liked to paint occasionally and we even visited his dreams. We know that Trip Tucker had a brother and sister on Earth; that he played 'Go' and he even had a birthmark - that's possibly a little too much info... Ahem.

But some other regular characters, although they appear week-in and week-out were just not revealed to us as fully rounded people. They have a job. They do the job. They live till next week. End of story. And frankly, this isn't enough!

Let's start with Mr. Scott. Here is a man - a Scotsman - who is phenomenally talented when it comes to Warp engines, who even has the title 'Miracle Worker' to his name. He is THAT good. He also likes to drink Scotch (*The Trouble with Tribbles*). OK.... and what else? Think hard now. Yes, he plays the bagpipes (*Star Trek III: The Search for Spock*) and can wield a Claymore (*Day of the Dove*). Right, so he practically ticks every box about being a Scot. He is shown to date three times but in nearly 100 hours on TV that accounts for only 10 minutes of female company. Talk about one-dimensional.

Geordi La Forge fares a little better. It seems that *Trek* likes its engineers to love engineering and that's about it. Geordi is a great engineer and his best friend is Data. Just how Geordi and Data came to be such good friends is never explored, but one wonders whether this developed when Geordi was called to investigate Data's

mechanical issues. A bit like making friends with your doctor, I suppose. Anyway, as friends they hang out, albeit rarely, as seen in *Elementary, Dear Data*.

Geordi plays a bumbling Dr. Watson to Data's superior Sherlock Holmes. Geordi suffers even when he is given an episode, as both *Aquiél* and *Identity Crisis* can attest. In the former, he falls for the crewman who records a video diary and in the latter he turns into a creature invisible to light. I don't know anybody who has these two episodes in their top ten list!

Finally, let's look at Kes. Possibly the most interesting character in *Voyager*. She was beamed aboard and then hidden away as the Doctor's sidekick. Kes was an Ocampa from the Delta quadrant. Basically humanoid, the species lived for nine years and had latent telepathic powers. The premise in a nutshell should have kept *Voyager* going in storylines for hours. Did we see her age slowly? Have regrets about leaving home? Or even see her relationship with Neelix honestly develop? Nope, nothing, nada. This character could have been used to reflect the human condition in so many ways and instead she was quite literally forgotten about. Even Neelix forgot her over time - well, about one episode actually. Probably because Seven turned up in that shiny figure-hugging space costume.

So fingers crossed that *Star Trek: Discovery* will let us revel in new, three-dimensional characters we can grow to know and love all over again. Except for the engineers, of course!

Keep on Trekkin'!



HORROR

Obscura

As a change of pace, this month, the antsy Andrew Pollard chats to the director of a film you may have overlooked recently...



WELCOME TO THE ASYLUM



Marcus Nispel is a director who has managed to do something that many often feel is near-impossible: he actually made a good horror remake. Twice! As well as helming the well-received redos of both *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and *Friday the 13th*, Nispel is also the man behind *Pathfinder* and the reboot of *Conan*. *The Asylum*, the German director's 2015 movie, sees him handling his own idea and story from scratch, putting together a sinister, creepy, and often humorous movie that is sure to appeal to long-standing fans of the horror genre.

We spent some time with Nispel to discuss *The Asylum* on the eve of its UK TV Premiere on Horror Channel.

STARBURST: *The Asylum* is your latest film, although in some markets people may know it as *Backmask* or *Exeter*...

Marcus Nispel: Yeah, there's a sure-fire way to confuse just about anyone! It beats me. Originally, we called it *Backmask* because of a major part in the movie. We had to shorten the first act a little bit – it was somewhat of a MacGuffin, and a lot of people didn't even know what it meant anymore, which shocked me because it shows how I'm aging. *Exeter* is the place that we shot it, so we gave it that name, but apparently that's meaningless in the UK and you guys get your own title.

Yep, we get *The Asylum*, which is a pretty straightforward title.

That gets me, because I like to be a little bit puzzled when I read a title. I didn't know what *Apocalypse Now* meant when I read the English title that they used in Germany when I grew up there. I didn't know what an exorcist was when I read that [*The Exorcist*] for the first time. It's strange. What beats me, is aren't there like a whole bunch of 'asylum' movies out there already?

Now, you put the screenplay for the film together with Kirsten Elms, but where did the initial idea for the story come from?

What triggered it was that Steven Schneider was introduced to me. He just came from *Paranormal Activity* and *Insidious* and those movies, and he said "Let's do one together". I said that it sounded good and that we could do it for very little money but have more creative control than we'd ever had before. He asked me to write one page about what I would wanna do and then he could tell me if he wanted to do this or not. I was thinking about it. You see, I never thought that another exorcism movie would be possible after *The Exorcist*. To me, that's the perfect movie, the perfect horror movie. I thought that I would like to approach that but I would want it to happen to the actual guys that go and watch these movies. An exorcism movie is usually with an Ellen Burstyn, a movie star, a Gregory Peck-type. I said "What happens to the guys who see these movies, the bunch of slackers?" So when I presented it to Steven, he liked it because he felt that a lot of the irreverence is missing in these new horror movies; they all take themselves very seriously. That's probably a good thing, but we wanted to do something different. I said, "Look, here's something I want to tell you going in – it's not going to be a remake and it's not going to be a found footage movie!"

There was a stage where every horror film seemed to be found footage at a certain point a few years ago...

Well, I'm responsible for a whole bunch of remakes and he's responsible for the found footage stuff. We had to do something different here now. I want to make sure I get to do something that the studios won't let me do.

This is the first time that you've really created your own story from scratch. The likes of *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, *Friday the 13th*, *Pathfinder* and *Conan* were all adapted from an existing property, so how different was it for you in that regard?

Well, the relationship of a director and the studio is kind of like the relationship between a farmer and his mule. When you do a remake, it's even more so the case. You become like a dog of many masters. Even though I tried to find a lot of freedom in that, at the end there's a certain rulebook and certain expectations that you have to live up to. When you get known for that then you just get more of that. And I just wanted to break out of that. It was genre again, but it's going to be my genre and I wanted to do something very, very different. One idea was of doing an amateur exorcism. In fact, I would remake just about any movie if I could cast just amateurs to be in it. It's just, like, more fun. The other thing was, I wanted to do something different in structure. It's a weird thing now where when you make a movie, people wanna know what type they're gonna be from the first two minutes. I wanna fuck with their heads a little bit, so we did something, and I don't wanna give too much away here, I wanted to breach styles. I wanted to start like one of those *House Party* movies, then the second act is like a paranormal movie, and then the third act is a downright slasher movie. People don't know what hits them, right? If I tell my wife it's a slasher movie, she's not going to go and see it. These are all things you can't do when you make a remake of a movie called *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*.

And *The Asylum* certainly keeps you on your toes, flipping between horror subgenres and even having an element of *The Thing* at one point.

With this, it's a bit of a mystery, which usually these movies are not. The only mystery in these movies that I've done in the past is who's gonna get it next and how. When we were writing it, when we wrote the outline, it seemed to me to be obvious that after page 25 the first head should roll. But when we did it, I was like "Why don't we wait much longer?" I enjoy the amateurs trying to figure things out too much. The moment you stir them up and send them screaming, that's over. Also we broke what a normal horror movie would do right now, in particular a slasher flick, by not having the blood splashing early. It was the kind of movie where we could do that. I expect there's zero expectations for the film right now, and I prefer it like that. You do a movie like *Conan*, you do a movie like *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, and the expectations go crazy before you even get started. When we did *Friday the 13th*, in the end I wanted to reveal Jason's face, I wanted the mask to fall off and I wanted to show some guy really pitiful, almost like a child, like a humungous child. The producers go to Comic-Con and some boy dressed up like Jason comes up to them, some fanboy, and he goes "Dude, whatever you do you don't show Jason's face - ever." They came back and they were so terrified, saying how we needed to take that out and reshoot. You know, it was like feeling like you were on a leash; anybody can give their opinion but you. And I get it.





There's a great chemistry between the core group of characters and plenty of humour, such as the group trying to find an exorcism guideline online.

My wife is the voiceover [of a faux exorcism tutorial featured in the film]. She used to be a stewardess, so I said to do it like a flight attendant. But we tried to get scenes from *The Exorcist*. Originally there was supposed to be a point in the movie where the group goes "*Exorcism? What is that? That doesn't exist*", and then they rent the movie and do everything that Max von Sydow does to Linda Blair. So that was the idea, but it's not easy to get anything from *The Exorcist*. So we did it animated. But I tried to do this movie to defy some stereotypes. One is that I can only do remakes. The other one is that Germans don't have a sense of humour!

The humour in *The Asylum* does catch the viewer a little off guard initially, but it works well with the tone.

I'm really glad you say so, because every day I would talk about the balance between funny and serious. Yes, they're amateurs, but they can get seriously hurt. I'm glad you liked the cast. This is the one thing I really take pride in. I'm sort of a questionable filmmaker and I sort of feel myself through the medium and have fun with it, but the one thing I do take great pride in is getting nice ensembles together. Whenever we started this, people would ask what movie should we watch, and I'd always say nothing but in the end I'd make them watch *Breaking Away*. It's kind of odd to be making a horror movie and telling them to watch that, but I think it's just a fantastic movie and I care about every one of those characters. There's no bad guy here or there's no good-looking blonde guy who's an asshole and the villain, but on this one I wanted to like them all.

There's clearly a strong chemistry between the core groups of actors in *The Asylum*. Is that something that came naturally for them or is it something that you purposely worked on with them?

It was absolutely natural. They started like that, they all became best friends. You should see them on Facebook, pulling each other's legs! It's a real joy for me. Sometimes you go and do a movie and people get very jaded on both sides of the camera. That's why I like these kind of movies because everybody's excited to make them, everybody's sort of a fan of the genre, and those kids just wanna have fun. The hardest thing was to cut the first act down.

What elements of those cuts can you tell us about?

It just simply enough was down to people not having an idea of what backmasking was! It was just the MacGuffin so it was easy to take out. We took 10 minutes of backmasking out. In a way, I didn't necessarily disagree with it because I knew that I couldn't just have them party forever – I needed to create the sense of a threat.

Just as important as the cast is the actual location. The very spooky building that the film was based in, that's a real place?

You know what's funny? They said that there was a team who wanted to do the movie with me who were based in Rhode Island. If you say Rhode Island to me then I think of white picket fences, beautiful churches and a Dennis the Menace sort of world. I don't associate it with horror movies at all. So I went on the Internet, like something out of

the movie, and I just Googled 'scary locations in Rhode Island'. Up comes Exeter immediately, and not only is it scary but it's supposedly the most haunted place in America. The moment we decided to shoot there, these paranormal TV shows called me up to see how I'd got in there as they'd been trying for years to get in there. It was like their wet dream. On a funny side-line, when we wrote it we had no idea where we would go. First of all, do we shoot it in a regular house? No, they need to be confined somehow. Maybe there's a mental asylum, maybe there's a background story, and maybe after they closed it down and reopened it as a branch of rehab of some sort. We arrived there and nobody had been in that building for 50 years. It was cemented closed. We were the first ones to break through it. When we went in, it was like a time capsule; the ceilings had collapsed and were on the floor, there was soil in there with stuff growing on it. The neighbouring building, part of it was still open. I said, "What's that thing there?" They said, "Oh, it burnt down and then they reopened it as a rehab." That was the scariest, the weirdest thing that happened in Exeter. I've got nothing supernatural to report but that blew me away. It was exactly like real life following fiction.

Considering where you were shooting, how did the cast and the crew find it on site?

They loved it. I like to put them in a real situation that I prefer to a stage. So I really liked that we were in a real place. On the acting, Schneider called me up while we were getting ready to shoot the movie and said "Wouldn't it be great to shoot the movie in real time, then everything happens over 2 hours or a day?" Then I wanted to take it even further and do it without a cut. I'd just seen *La Casa Muda*, the Uruguayan movie where it was just one take. I loved that. So the first draft was without a cut. If you look at the movie now, it's six kids in a circle spinning a bottle, six kids in a circle doing levitation, six kids in a circle doing an exorcism. It's always six kids in a circle, so I tried to lay it out in such a way so that we could play this with them in one room and the camera always keeps on moving. Then later on I was like, "You know what? It was a good exercise in austerity but I really do need to make cuts and it would be scarier then." But it was good to have gone through the discipline of writing it that lean that you could technically do it this way. Because of that, because of being written this way, it meant that you could shoot it in sequence.

And were there any films you drew inspiration from when you were putting this movie together?

Well, in a way, almost all of them. It's not an honest remake but it's taking the piss out of everything that was ever remade. It's great because we've all seen them. It's very easy to talk to the writer, to talk to the cast, because they always would know exactly what to do. Actually, the little kid [Michael Ormsby], he wasn't fluent in those movies. So when the exorcism happens, I told him to try some process kind of similar to *The Exorcist*. Then I'd always get this look... I was thinking and I realised that he was heavily into heavy metal and rock 'n' roll and he plays guitar. He'd really much rather be a musician, I guess. So I said to him "Mosh pit!" And that just worked, he knew exactly what to do. He surprised us. Those were the magic words.



THE ASYLUM has its UK TV Premiere October 21st on HORROR CHANNEL. Sky 319 Virgin 149 Freeview 70 Freesat 138.



TAKING IT TO THE

MAD MAXX

NOTHING ADDS A BIT OF GRUNT TO A MOVIE LIKE A CLASSIC AMERICAN MUSCLE CAR. STARBURST SAT DOWN WITH DARK HORSE CUSTOMS AND SECTOR 5 FILMS HEAD HONCHO WARREN CROYLE TO FIND OUT WHAT GOES INTO PUTTING ONE OF THESE BEASTS ON THE ROAD, AND IN THE MOVIES...

STARBURST: So what came first, cars or movies?

WARREN CROYLE: Cars before movies oddly enough. We often got asked to make cars for various films or commercials, or to rent my personal cars, which we did for years. Now we only make them for our own films and various customers around the world.

Tell us about DHC...

Dark Horse Customs is a car maker, not really a car restoration shop. We make our cars the way we make them, from the rails up with our own added engineering specs, and we make mostly 69's, which is the best year for Mustangs, Camaros, Chargers, GTOs etc. We tend to make a lot of 69 Mustang Fastbacks or Mach 1's, as it's really the most badass body style going!

Which car is your favourite and why?

Probably the MADD MAXX, it's a one of a kind beast and it's like a living, breathing monster - a combo of Superman meets Godzilla. It's been through many changes and many engines, trannie's and rear ends through the years and is our go-to "prototype car" where we run the latest greatest parts to see if they can hold up. We've recently developed the 545 Cobra Jet engine, tested it in the MADD MAXX, romped and stomped it until we broke everything that was going to break and now that it's gone through that phase we will use the 545 engines in our Legend Series. 800 hp cars that you can drive to the store, the car show etc, but when you throttle down half way on that pedal, hold on to your knickers!

What's the craziest customisation you've ever done?

Well, stuffing a 545 Cobra Jet into the engine compartment of a Mustang is pretty crazy. We had to cross brace the engine compartment, cross brace the chassis and frame rails and more so the car wouldn't bend under the engine torque. Back in Los Angeles, we had a sheikh in a LIMO HUMMER, if you can imagine such a thing, pull us off the road demanding that we sell him the MADD MAXX. Well there's no way that's going to happen, so we made him a replica, which he romps around in somewhere in Saudi Arabia.

How long do you work on the cars for on average?

We make them much faster than most builders, sometimes as quick as three months, some take up to a year, all depends.

What's more important: speed or cool?

All of it is important, in fact it's the little details that matter and all of them add up.

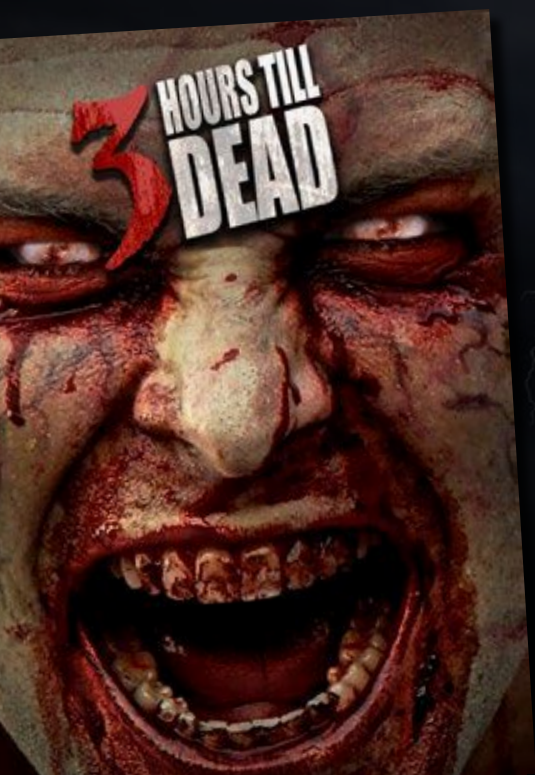
DHC cars have to have the right amount of muscle, handle well, look badass *and* go fast - as well as be able to do killer 360 burnouts, so it's all of the above! We do things you normally don't see out there. We fill in those gangly extension panel lines most cars have, tuck the bumpers in, remove insidious turn signal lights, and all kinds of things to make our cars sleek and sexy as all get out. We spend agonising hours getting the posture just right. Every car is truly different so there's no real formula, we just keep going until we reach perfection!

What are you up to now?

Right now we're building the 545 Legend car, this is a more refined MADD MAXX type car but more of a perfect show car. It's influenced by the iconic Shelby builds but also influenced by the amazing Ford GT car with a little bit of Lamborghini in there. It's going to be a six-speed automatic, you shift with paddles on the steering wheel and it's going to have no gauges or switches except the start button and a kill switch. This build is literally gonna be out of this world; imagine Giger, *Star Trek*, *Star Wars* and *Doctor Who* all combined and influencing the overall design, now we just have to get a matching TARDIS box to go with it! On the movie side of things we've just had the premiere of our latest movie **3 Hours Till Dead**, which has also been nominated for a bunch of indie awards, so keep an eye out for that. Then it's onto **360 Death Squad** next year, featuring six of our most badass cars - it's going to be a blast!



To find out more about Dark Horse Customs' vehicles and Sector 5 films go to darkhorsecustoms.net and sector5films.net. Look for DHC cars in the upcoming films, **3 Hours Till Dead**, **Blood Red Snow**, **Hangover in Death Valley** and **360 Death Squad**!



THE SIX STARS OF 360 DEATH SQUAD!

EVIL 69 MACH 1



I AM THE PRINCE OF DARKNESS OF THE BACK STREETS, MY LORD IS MADD MAXX, I SEEK TO DESTROY EVIL IN ANY CAPACITY AT MY DISPOSAL AND BOW TO NO MAN ONLY THE LAWS OF GOOD AND EVIL. I AM EVIL 69...



BASE MODEL	69 MUSTANG MACH 1
ENGINE	351 CLEVELAND MODIFIED
TOP SPEED	130 MPH
TRANSMISSION	TCI RACING T6 TRANS
HORSEPOWER	400
COST	\$95,000

MADD MAXX



I INSTILL FEAR AND AWE, AND WHEN I ACCELERATE, YOU EXPERIENCE THE TRUE LORD OF DARKNESS OF THE ROAD. YOU WILL KNOW WHY I AM THE MOST FEARED AND SINISTER DEMON OF THE STREETS. I AM MADD MAXX...



BASE MODEL	1970 MUSTANG FASTBACK
ENGINE	DHC 545 COBRA JET ENGINE
TOP SPEED	180 MPH
TRANSMISSION	TREMEC 5 SPEED
HORSEPOWER	800
COST	PRICELESS

SUBLIME 69



I AM STEALTH, ANY ATTEMPT TO FLEE ON THE HIGHWAYS AND BYWAYS OF THE ROAD IS FUTILE. I WILL LOCK ON AND TRACK YOU UNTIL YOU ARE DESTROYED AND WILL REJOICE IN HEARING YOUR LAST HEARTBEAT. I AM SUBLIME 69...



BASE MODEL	69 MUSTANG MACH 1
ENGINE	351 WINDSOR MODIFIED
TOP SPEED	150 MPH
TRANSMISSION	WORLD CLASS TS 5 SPEED
HORSEPOWER	450
COST	\$95,000

77 TRANS AM (BLACK OUT EDITION)



I AM THE DARKNESS, LORD OF THE NIGHT, UNSEEN UNTIL IT IS TOO LATE FOR YOU TO ESCAPE MY DOMINION. I WILL ENVELOP YOU WITH YOUR OWN FEAR AND CRUSH YOUR SOUL TO NOTHINGNESS FOR YOUR CRIMES. I AM 77...



BASE MODEL	77 TA - SPECIAL EDITION
ENGINE	6.6L 400 - V8
TOP SPEED	120 MPH
TRANSMISSION	BORG WARNER SUPER T10 4 SPEED
HORSEPOWER	450
COST	\$75,000

THE PROFESSOR



I AM THE GUARDIAN OF 360 DEATH SQUAD, I CAN CONJURE ANGELS, I SEE AND FEEL THOSE WHO COMMIT CRIMES AGAINST THE INNOCENT IN MY MIND, ONCE I SENSE YOUR PRESENCE THERE IS NO HOPE. I AM THE PROFESSOR...



BASE MODEL	65 BUICK RIVIERA
ENGINE	401 NAIL HEAD ENGINE
TOP SPEED	150 MPH
TRANSMISSION	SUPER TURBINE 400 TRANS
HORSEPOWER	300
COST	\$60,000

DELILAH



I AM THE DISTRACTION THAT BRINGS DOWN EVIL INCARNATE, I CAN SHAPESHIFT INTO YOUR DEEPEST DESIRE AND THROW YOU OFF YOUR GAME. WHEN I DO, THE 360 WOLVES WILL HEAR MY CALL AND EAT YOU ALIVE. I AM DELILAH...



BASE MODEL	68 FORD
ENGINE	302 SMALL BLOCK
TOP SPEED	120 MPH
TRANSMISSION	MUNCIE M20 4 SPEED
HORSEPOWER	400
COST	\$50,000



THE BITCH IS BACK

BY CHRIS HAYDON

THE AMERICAN COLLEGE FRATERNITY SYSTEM IS ALWAYS A GREAT PLACE TO START WITH HORROR FILMS. WHEN SCREAM QUEENS HIT TV SCREENS, IT GLORIOUSLY (AND GORILY) SENT UP THE ENTIRE SUBGENRE AND LEFT US WANTING MORE. WHICH WE'RE GETTING AS SEASON TWO IS HEADING OUR WAY SOON...

Last year, a show introduced us to a group of brattish college girls contemplating whether they should let a young mother bleed to death in a bathtub so they could listen to TLC's *Waterfalls*. From that introductory sequence onwards, the depraved brainchild of *Glee* and *American Horror Story*'s Ryan Murphy, Brad Falchuk, and Ian Brennan was happy to cross every line, taking no prisoners when it came to infectious and downright sadistic ferocity.

FOX's spitefully joyous black comedy-horror *Scream Queens* is undoubtedly polarising viewing; some will relish in all the tongue-in-cheek controversy, lapping up laughs and spewing out a plethora of venomous quotes; others will feel their skin crawl with distinct unease and witness their moral code become awash with staining, ugly filth. Either reaction is entirely appropriate, and entirely warranted, but for those who couldn't get enough of Wallace University's most scathing sorority Kappa Kappa Tau, you'll be thrilled to know that the time has come to make your pledges for the second season.

However, in a similar vein to close relation *American Horror Story*, the dynamic is ready to undergo a major shift; reinvigorating the thrills and spills for a future batch of episodes. Whilst the show's first season was set on the fictitious university campus, the next outing will be

staged in a hospital. To fully understand the logic behind the location switch, a recap of the original thirteen episodes is in order.



Channeling the tones, palettes and, more importantly, the stereotypes of the horror genre, *Scream Queens* resurrects a terrible unsolved mystery from 1995. It's a shameful secret and smear on the Louboutin-sporting, Pumpkin Spice Latte-gulping ladies of Kappa Kappa Tau - the most fashionable and fierce sorority on campus. In the present day, Chanel Oberlin (or Chanel #1 - played with bloodthirsty brilliance by Coven and *Freak Show* alumna Emma Roberts) is the new president of the sisterhood. With the support of her loyal minions (or 'idiot hookers', as she puts it) Chanel #2 (pop music sensation Ariana Grande), Chanel #3 (Billie Lourd - daughter of General Leia Organa herself, Carrie Fisher), and Chanel #5 (the fantastic Abigail Breslin), the girls set out to make Kappa a house, controlled, by beauty, glamour, riches, and ultimately bitterness.

Tired of their obsessive and downright evil ways, the university's dean Cathy Munsch (beautifully portrayed by the





definitive 'Scream Queen' Jamie Lee Curtis) demands the Chaneles to accept any girl who wishes to become a part of Kappa. This transition enables the doors to be opened for students like Grace Gardner (Skyler Samuels), a wide-eyed and devoted young woman who wants to uncover more about her mother's past, much to the distaste of overprotective father Wes (Oliver Hudson). Other new pledges include Zayday Williams (Keke Palmer), the head-strong best friend of Grace who aspires to become Kappa's new president; Hester Ulrich (*Glee*'s Lea Michele) a warped, death and Chanel-obsessed scoliosis sufferer; Jennifer (Breezy Eslin); a devoted candle vlogger; Sam (Jeanna Han) a brooding tomboy lesbian; and Tiffany DeSalle (Whitney Meyer), a loveable deaf girl who resonates with all things Taylor Swift.



The switch-up in rules at Kappa does more than enrage the manipulative Chanel #1 - a pint-sized sociopath rendered with the hallmarks of *American Psycho*'s Patrick Bateman and *Nightcrawler*'s Lou Bloom - it also greatly taints her credibility. As their popularity and social 'importance' begins to plummet, Oberlin's relationship with Chad Radwell (Glen Powell), the filthy-rich president of the Dickie Dollar Scholars fraternity, becomes compromised. The coolest, most attention-grabbing guy on campus can't be seen with a 'garbage person' as he so eloquently labels her following the events. Fueled with aggression and tainted ego, Chanel and her followers attempt to make the new pledges' time in the Kappa house

as hellish and hurtful as possible, but what starts life as a sordid game quickly escalates into a series of disturbing, brutal murders at the hands of the Red Devil, a serial killer whose identity is shielded by the facade of the university's beloved mascot.

From here, *Scream Queens* develops into a beguiling and utterly riveting game of *Cluedo* - albeit an extremely offensive and ethically tasteless one. As time passes and the season progresses, the Kappa girls are trapped in an environment where anyone can become easily isolated, savagely attacked and ultimately die, but also a landscape where any single person could be the killer. Kappa's twisted ways have caused for many residents at Wallace University to dislike them actively - providing the perfect motive for such heinous crimes - but is the agenda that simple? Could the real culprit actually reside within the house itself? Could it be Dean Munsch, the instigator of all this newfound drama? The more the girls start digging, the more skeletons begin to reveal themselves. As their perfectly manicured nails become blackened and chipped from all the dirt and deceit, it becomes

apparent that there is a lot more to Kappa than just a great fashion sense.

Unquestionably, the show's strongest and most compelling muscle is that of its heart. Despite being a grossly vulgar, socially repugnant reflection of our poisonous consumer culture and oppression, *Scream Queens*' lifeblood comes from a sheer ode to horror filmmaking, and that pumps around all the filth and fire with a beautiful sincerity. The character developments, the snappy dialogue deliveries, the thematic settings, and narrative arcs are all textbook American horror, echoing the ill-fated teens of *Friday the 13th*, *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, and *Halloween*. Perhaps the richest debt of all is owed to the late, great Wes Craven's postmodern franchise *Scream*, which ironically now has its own television adaptation, too.



There is a thematic weight here that is both intoxicating and rewarding. Like the best of the genre, horror means casualties, and Fox's show is no exception to this rule. The deaths are frequent, visually inventive and downright gory; surely vibrant and violent enough to please any hound. Unfolding with an almost victim-of-the-week mentality, many of those who populated the first season will not make it to the forthcoming outing; well, unless they end up in the hospital's morgue, which is a distinct possibility. Much like the progression between *Murder House* and *Asylum*, principal characters will walk the paths between, while newcomers are invited to assist in the latest edition.



Roberts, Lee Curtis, Breslin, Lourd, Michele, Palmer, Powell, and Niecy Nash (the feisty campus security guard Officer Denise Hemphill) will reprise their roles for the second season, which begins airing on 20th September in the United States, and they will be bringing an army of additions with them to wreak havoc in the hospital. John Stamos - most famous for a prolonged role in medical drama *ER* and a leading role in the ABC sitcom *Full House* - will star as Dr. Brock Holt, the establishment's brilliant, but deeply secretive head surgeon.

Meanwhile teen heartthrob Taylor Lautner - the star behind *The Twilight Saga*'s beloved werewolf Jacob Black - will also play a medical professional in the new season. He'll take on the form of Dr. Cassidy Cascade, a young MD who suffers from a strange medical condition, but thanks to charm and good looks is able to make a positive impression on the volcanic Chaneles. Jerry O'Connell of *Stand by Me* and *Scream 2* notoriety will also take on an undisclosed role, and Colton Haynes - perhaps most celebrated for his fantastic role as Roy Harper/Arsenal in The CW's beloved DC Comics adaptation *Arrow* - will feature as a 'mysterious patient'.



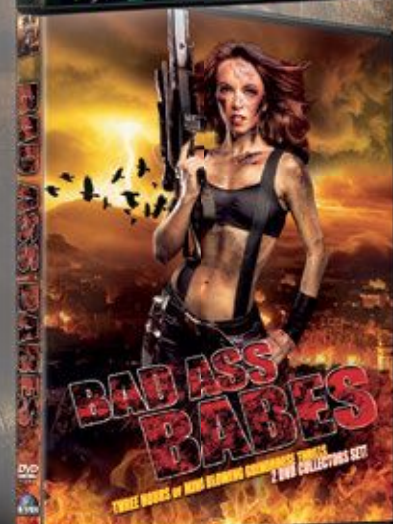
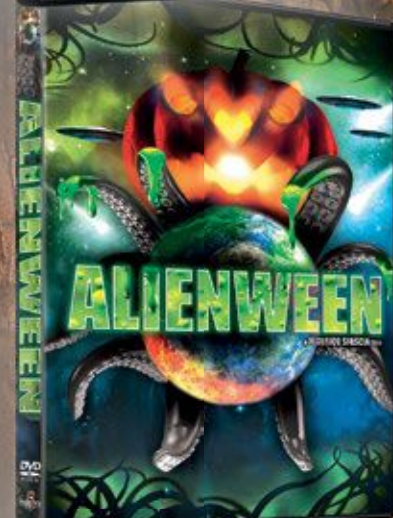
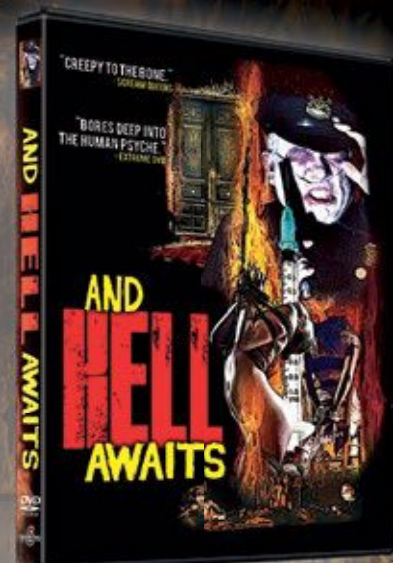
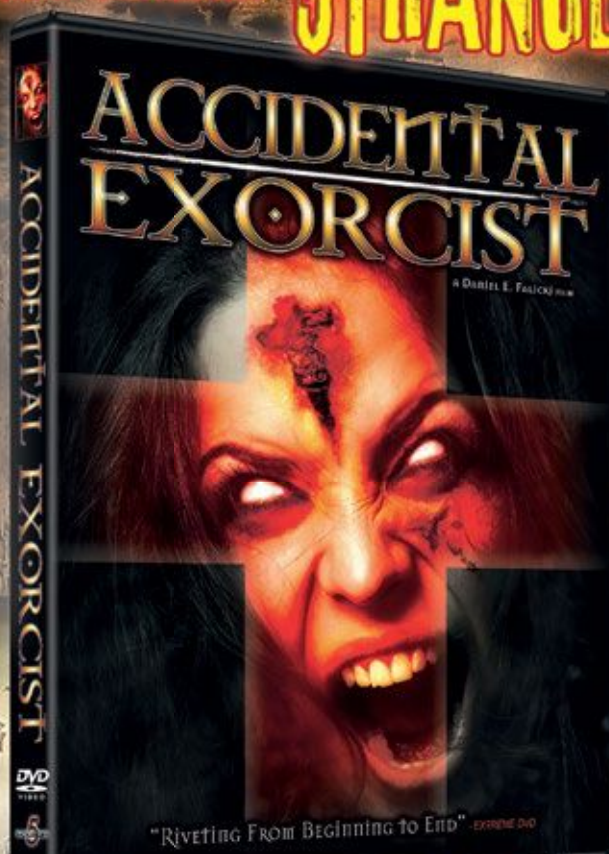
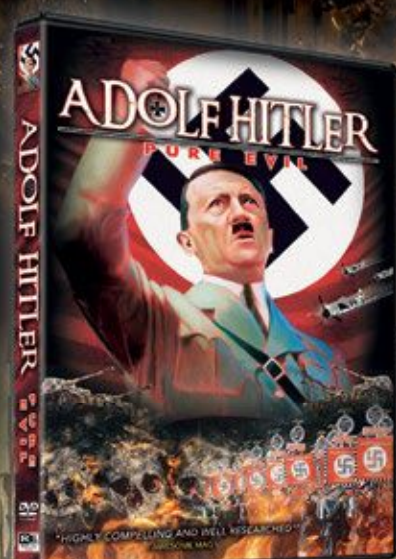
It has also been confirmed by showrunners Murphy, Falchuk, and Brennan that Season Two will feature an entirely different killer, offer a much broader array of horror cinema and popular culture references, and will be 'much darker, wilder and bloodier' than the first outing according to a recent interview. The season will also take place three years after the events of the Red Devil murders; giving weight to the Chaneles' identity here, and how they become involved with the medical profession. Murphy has also stated that the decision to operate (no pun intended...) in such a setting is a direct reference to Lee Curtis' involvement in the *Halloween* franchise, which was partially set in such a facility.

Like the best of the genre, *Scream Queens* revels in the reveal; the secret is thick and dense, asking the spectator to grab a magnifying glass and a torch before delving into the darkness. The levels of restraint on public knowledge of the second season is entirely deliberate and hugely thankful. As we get ever closer, it is pleasing to know so little about what we - and indeed our favourite pledges - are ultimately in for. Just like when we visit the hospital, faith is wholly put in the professionals; so it is time to lay back, squeeze those eyes shut, and let FOX inject you with their toxic and utterly addictive elixir. The doctor will see you now...

SCREAM QUEENS returns to FOX in the US on September 20th and will air in the UK this October on E4.



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HAIR-RAISING ADVENTURE!

by Chloe Smith

THE LATEST
ANIMATED TREAT
FROM **DREAMWORKS**
THAT LOOKS SET TO
CHARM AUDIENCES
AS IT FEATURES THOSE
BEQUIFFED DOLLS
FROM YEARS GONE
BY, **TROLLS...**

If you were a child between the 1960s and 1990s then you probably encountered or even owned one of the infamous Troll dolls - instantly recognisable with their outlandish and bright hair colour - particularly as they were one of the most popular toys of that decade.

When fisherman and woodcutter Thomas Dam made the first Troll toy as a Christmas gift for his daughter in the 1950s, he must have not given creating more a second thought, until the next day, when everyone else in his village wanted one of these later-dubbed 'Good Luck Trolls'. This then led to both the creation of the Dam company, and the mass production of the Trolls as toys that have always been extremely popular with children, particularly in the 1990s, when an animated TV series of the toys was produced.

However, the children of this generation can also count themselves lucky, because these toys are soon going to become similarly more popular and loved by kids today - and not just recollected by their parents or guardians. Why? Because children are no longer

only going to think of them as plastic toys, but also as characters from the big screen - as their own self-titled film *Trolls* is soon to be released in cinemas, thanks to DreamWorks acquiring the complete rights to the Trolls from the Dam company. So yes, there might well be a toy tie-in.

Unfortunately, DreamWorks hasn't released many specific details about the plot, other than the fact that the film is ultimately about the colourful fantastical world of the ever-singing, always happy trolls themselves. We do know that the trolls' happy, bright world is soon turned upside down and every Troll inhabitant is in grave danger thanks to the appearance of some formidable villains. The film itself will then specifically follow two troll protagonists - the optimistic and ever-cheerful Princess Poppy (Anna Kendrick), the incredibly happy ruler of the Trolls, and her polar opposite, the disgruntled Troll





survivalist
Branch

(played by
Justin Timberlake)

who actually thinks of Poppy as his enemy, as she is so annoyingly cheerful. Due to the unforeseen dangerous circumstances, they are forced to travel together on a quest to save their world from the clutches of the dangerous, evil, pessimistic monsters - called the Bergens - who want nothing more than to kidnap and consume every Troll, and destroy the constant state of optimism and happiness that exists in the Trolls' world. But will both Poppy and Branch be able to save their world and their people in time? And will they ever learn to get along, so that the quest can even get off the ground in the first place?

Trolls is DreamWorks' first musical venture since *The Prince of Egypt*, and so the bar is already set relatively high for some fans of the studio and of that particular film.

From the offset, the film does promise an impressive soundtrack, with the recent extremely popular chart hit *Can't Stop the Feeling* by Justin Timberlake being one highlight of the film's score. *Trolls* also boasts that it features not only more original music from Timberlake, but also probable future pop hits from artists such as Gwen Stefani, who also voices DJ Suki in the film, a Troll who plays her songs using insects.

Stefani isn't the only chart-topper featured on the soundtrack, though - Ariana Grande is said, by some sources, to also have a song featured, and Earth, Wind and Fire will also allegedly be featured on a collaboration between Timberlake and another of the film's leading actors - because as well as voicing one of the film's protagonists, actress Anna Kendrick will also be regularly lending her pitch perfect voice to the film's soundtrack. Zoëy Deschanel also makes an appearance or two on the score, because as well as boasting five original songs from the artists featured on the soundtrack, it is also filled with upbeat covers of hit songs ranging from the 1960s to the 1980s. These songs include *The Sound of Silence*

and two versions of *True Colours* - which most artists on the soundtrack, including Deschanel, are set to cover and sing in the film. The songs themselves are also set to be part of the film's narrative - so never fear, if you're not a fan of the spontaneous breaking out into song that can be found in musicals, then *Trolls* is the film for you. But if you are a fan of musicals, particularly the catchy songs, then *Trolls* will also deliver plenty of those, if the soundtrack listing is to go by. It seems to be the case that DreamWorks definitely want you to be dancing in your seat by the end of the film, given all of the pop classics that are going to make an appearance throughout the story.

The cast also boasts some very recognisable talent in terms of the voices behind the Trolls - with Kendrick and Timberlake not being the only big names visible in the film's

credits. As previously stated, Zoëy Deschanel will lend her voice to the film - specifically through a character named Bridget, who is a kind-hearted Bergen scullery maid. James Corden also stars, and he will be voicing a large troll by the name of Biggie. John Cleese is said to voice King Gristle Sr., the Bergen ruler, and Russell Brand will be voicing a free-spirited wise Troll named Creek. Kunal Nayyar will be making a big bang on screen as a glittery Troll named Guy Diamond, who apparently is always naked, and the young star of the recent *Annie* reboot, Quvenzhané Wallis, is also said to have an as-yet-unnamed role in the film.

Trolls also marks the fifth film written by screenwriters Jonathan Aibel and Glenn Berger for DreamWorks, after the *Kung Fu Panda* trilogy and *Monsters vs.*





and a whole lot of heart - *Trolls*, at bare minimum, is definitely set to give the iconic childhood toys a new depth and backstory, if not get a few songs stuck in your head for good measure, too.

But it also seems to have its own depth - exploring not only the underdogs of the Trolls fighting the bigger, stronger, evil Bergens, but also allowing two very different characters - Poppy and Branch - to grow and adapt to new creatures, adversaries, landscapes, and circumstances by being forced to embark on this quest together. So if you go into this film expecting a simple light-hearted, purely cutesy animated film like some films that are mainly aimed at children, then you might well be surprised. This is a DreamWorks film, after all, and even in the most humorous, light-hearted films, they have always managed to get in a few good emotional punches - and *Trolls* should be no exception.

With that in mind, we would definitely suggest bringing a few tissues with you, because you might just end up crying out with laughter when the film really starts to get going.

Aliens.

Considering the previous work of the pair, for the story alone, *Trolls* looks to be very promising, particularly in terms of being humorous yet emotional. From what we've seen already, *Trolls* looks to be another film from the two screenwriters that seamlessly balances heart-wrenching moments with action and a good dose of honour. From sarcastic quips ruining various emotional moments, to creatures pooping cupcakes, to characters having to try and save loved ones from what can only be certain death after seeing them kidnapped, to the two protagonists having to fight giant spiders and a variety of other menacing baddies, from what little visual footage DreamWorks has released of the film, it really appears to strike that same balance that can be found in the partnership's previous work, particularly the *Kung Fu Panda* trilogy.

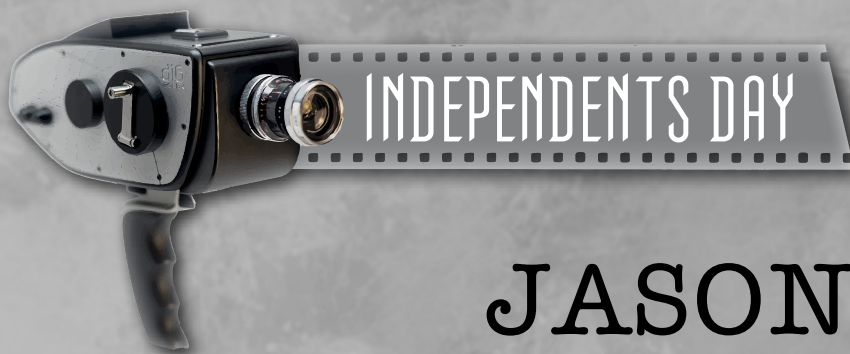
But a promising script is not all that *Trolls* has up its sleeve (or hidden in its giant neon hair). The bright, colourful animation of the film also appears to be as detailed and breathtaking as can be expected from the DreamWorks Animation studios. The colours are bright and captivating, without being too harsh on your eyes. But that's not all, there is also incredible attention to detail in the film's animation - with the individual hair on each Troll's head apparently becoming visible in certain close-up shots. When viewed in 3D, it's also been said that the animation will become especially textured and detailed, and even more captivating. So if you aren't already whisked away by the story or singing of the Trolls themselves, then the animation is what will draw you into the film from the start, as it's full of the lush landscapes and vivid characters that you would come to expect from a DreamWorks Animation film.

Filled with scrapbooking, singing, fighting, surviving,



TROLLS will sing its way into UK cinemas on October 21st.





by Martin Unsworth

JASON FIGGIS

STARBURST catches up with JASON FIGGIS, an Irish filmmaker who is a true auteur, whose films have already gained rave reviews and who is certainly one to watch...



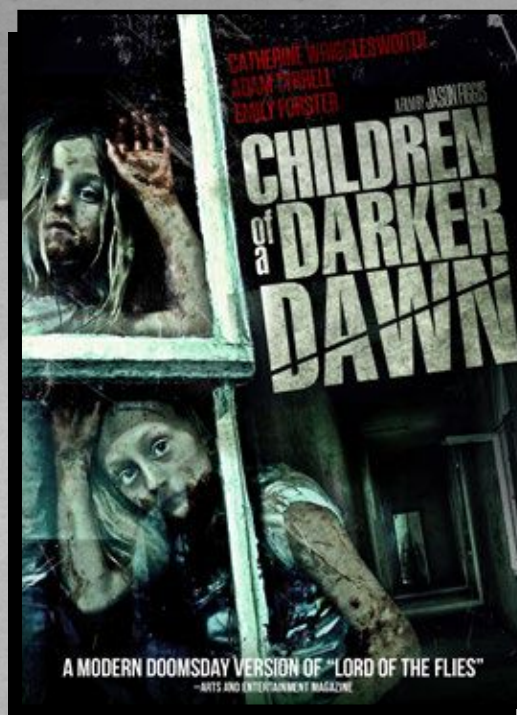
STARBURST: What inspired you to get into filmmaking?

Jason Figgis: I have always had a love of cinema. My father used to collect every issue of *Photoplay* magazine and I would sift through the pages and forever be intrigued by the images and story outlines and reviews. I went to college to study animation but was unable to get the course I wanted (because I had been wandering through France with a friend - a former Hells Angel biker called Gary - and missed the deadline for application). I ended up getting onto the model-making course where I almost severed a finger while building a miniature of a fully kitted-out gymnasium. While my finger was recovering, I heard that Murakami-Wolf were hiring animation painters for the hit TV show *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles* so I went along and got a job. I left college and began work. After two seasons of the show, I went to London and began work for Steven Spielberg's company Amblimation on the feature film *American Tail 2: Fievel Goes West* where I worked on special effects and character painting in the Ink and Paint department. I later worked for Richard Williams of *Who Framed Roger Rabbit?* fame on his cult feature *The Thief and the Cobbler* as an inker and painter. It wasn't until 2002 that I set up a film and TV production company called October Eleven Pictures to produce live action films.

It's admirable that you don't play on the fact your cousin is writer/director Mike Figgis; have you had any advice from him along the way?

I have had some great chats with Mike and he is always encouraging. I would consider him an all-round artist and not just a film director. He has been quite innovative in many ways, especially regarding the progress of digital cinema and also stills photography. He has an incredible eye. I visited him at his London studio and he showed me his stunning photographs of Paris Hilton. These images remind me of the photographs of Norma Jean Baker and express the vulnerabilities of a human being and not the standard images of celebrity that are normally seen. Beautiful work. Mike is a wonderful guy and if I needed some specific advice

CHILDREN OF A DARKER DAWN



or guidance he would be very available. I would never trade on the familial associations, though, as I would prefer to try and carve my own path and see what comes of my own endeavours.

What have been the worst obstacles that have gotten in the way to making your visions a reality?

I suppose it would have to be in the search for like-minded individuals who share my vision to get the work produced and post-produced and available to the public. I imagine this is the same for anyone creating something from nothing. I like to think of myself as a collaborator but this idea is limited. One still likes to collaborate with those who share a common vision for the work and are collaborative in the moulding of the end product in a common direction. If opposing views are always present then the work is never realised to its greatest potential. I can be quite forceful when it comes to the final cut but I listen to my co-editor and regular collaborator Darren Travers as he sometimes feels like the other voice in my head questioning my decisions. We have always managed to work out the cut of a scene or an idea

to its best potential through sometimes hours of constructive debate. For example, *Don't You Recognise Me?* came in at a first pass of two hours and fifteen minutes. We had some serious hours of debate in order to cut the film down to the existing ninety-three minutes. You need this kind of combined passion for the work - especially when you are working with extremely limited finances on a project - because you are essentially doing a huge amount of work with no payment for that work. I learned early on that if I was to get my films made then I would have to become proficient at every aspect of production from writing through to post-production. I achieved levels of competency through serious trial and error and lots of online tutorials.

Are there any particular problems getting films made in Ireland?

It is quite difficult to get funding in Ireland but I refuse to let this stop me from making films. If the desire is there to get the work done then it seems that the Universe moves in mysterious ways to allow the progress to continue. I think that passion for a project inspires others to want to get involved and I have been

very lucky with the actors and production crew that have been attracted to the projects so far.

What is it about horror and hard-edge thrillers that draw you to them?

I have always enjoyed thrillers and atmospheric horror films and ghost stories. Actually my particular favourites are the BBC's series of masterful adaptations of M. R. James' work (and one Dickens) in the '70s. It was a series called *A Ghost Story for Christmas* (produced and directed by Lawrence Gordon Clark). I feel that if the visual and auditory elements of a horror/thriller work perfectly in tandem and work to compliment a great story with great acting, then the outcome can quite often be a thrilling experience. But I truly believe that first rate acting in whatever genre of film it may be is what will lift the work to greater heights. This is what I strive to do as much as possible in my work. I love actors and I love to give the actors the room to create a believable character. It is a particular challenge with horror films to suspend disbelief so I find that really strong performances allow that suspension to be further fortified. I think the audience is hard-wired to react in a very visceral way to

THE ECSTASY OF ISABEL MANN



horror films and that this adds to the thrill.

After having films centred on cannibals and then vampires, are there any other 'classic' horror topics you'd like to explore?

I would love to develop a zombie film idea that I have but it is very unusual in that you never actually see a zombie. This will be a challenge to try and get right but I feel that the idea is rather unique and could turn out rather well. I also have another vampire film in development called *Night Photography*, which I feel is a new approach to the subgenre but I wanted to film it in black and white and feel that is now impossible because of the success of the creepy effective *A Girl Walks Home Alone at Night*. I feel that an audience will think that I am trying to emulate that film so may have to reconsider it in colour. I also have another post-apocalyptic film in development as well as a haunted house film called *Winifred Meeks*, which I am very excited about and I am hoping that film will turn out to be very creepy indeed, but it will need some decent funding! I have a werewolf film in development (with a twist) called *The Lycanthrope*. This film will see the return of Darren Travers. There

are also two serial killer projects and two other ghost stories in development.

You appear to have built up a group of 'go-to' actors; we imagine that makes everything easier on set?

Yes. I have indeed. Really the one actor in particular is Darren Travers, who has appeared in most projects. He played the crazed father in *Children of a Darker Dawn* - released by MVD Entertainment Group, the vampire Acacius in *The Ecstasy of Isabel Mann* - released by MVD Entertainment Group - and Daz/Damo in *Don't You Recognise Me?*. He is a wonderfully immersive actor and sometimes presents folders with a hundred pages of character development notes. He is one of the most committed actors I have ever met. On the set of *Isabel Mann*, the children in the cast thought he was in fact from Eastern Europe because he never once came out of character. Sometimes lead actors on projects come back in other capacities, such as Catherine Wrigglesworth, who starred in *Children of a Darker Dawn* but came on board *The Ecstasy of Isabel Mann* as lead make-up artist and art director. She is also art director of my new psychological horror, *The Paper Child*.

***Don't You Recognise Me?* plays almost as a pseudo-documentary; what sort of planning went into the production, as there are scenes that almost seem improvised?**

This film required a huge amount of preparation work. The actors rehearsed for months in advance of shooting. Darren, Jason Sherlock, and Shauna Ryan spent a lot of time together around Dublin city - completely in character - walking the streets, sitting in pubs and apartments, utterly immersed in the roles. This was imperative because when we began filming, they could never come out of character or lose their focus or objective. If they had, the film would not have worked. We shot the feature in around seventy-two hours and at end of shooting our DoP Alan Rogers updated his Facebook status amusingly, with one word - *traumatised!*

***Don't You Recognise Me?* has just been premiered at the STARBURST International Film Festival; are there any other screenings lined up and will you eventually be looking for further distribution?**

First of all, I would like to say that we are absolutely thrilled that our lead actor Darren Travers won the Best Performance

DON'T YOU RECOGNISE ME?



award at the STARBURST International Film Festival this year and we would like to extend our thanks for all of the support we have received. We have the Irish premiere at Dublin's Irish Film Institute as part of the 20th Horrorthon International Film Festival (which is orchestrated by the longest running horror festival director Ed King - who is a great supporter of my work). We also have the US premiere in November at Fright Night Film Festival in Louisville, Kentucky. We are currently looking for some strong distribution for the film. I don't see the point in making a film if it is not made available to an audience via the best platforms possible.

What's next for you?

I am currently in post-production of a psychological horror film called *The Paper Child*, which stars Bill Fellows (*Broadchurch*, *Downton Abbey*) and Bryan Murray (who played the notorious Trevor Jordache in *Brookside*). This film was written by my wife, Bernadette Manton, and is a fabulously intense script. I remember at the first reading Bryan Murray said "we shouldn't alter a word of this dialogue". This film is almost completed the edit. I am also a producer on Bernadette's feature film *LadyWalker*, which will star Hayley Mills (*Whistle Down the Wind*, *Tiger Bay*). We are very excited about that project too - and it's NOT a horror film!

✦

THE ECSTASY OF ISABEL MANN and the feature documentary *THE TWILIGHT HOUR* are released on DVD in the US on December 14th, and *DON'T YOU RECOGNISE ME?* can be seen at festivals over the next few months.





REVIEW:

DON'T YOU RECOGNISE ME?

CERT: TBC / DIRECTOR & SCREENPLAY: JASON FIGGIS / STARRING: DARREN TRAVERS, MATTHEW TOMAN, SHAUNA RYAN, JASON SHERLOCK / RELEASE DATE: TBC

Oh great. Another low budget faux documentary. This is going to be hard work, isn't it? Hold on! Leave those preconceptions at the door, mister, as *Don't You Recognise Me?* is actually a powerhouse of brutality, tension, and - even more shockingly - amazing acting.

Tony (Toman) is planning his next documentary. He's going to spend a day in the life of someone who lives his life as a self-styled gangster on a rough Dublin estate. Meeting up with K (Sherlock), he's welcomed into the seemingly amiable young scamp's flat and introduced to his friends and (multiple) girlfriends. K tells Tony that he's taken on his father's role in the community following his murder, and is seething at the similar loss of one his 'brothers' the year previously. He appears to have his heart in the right place, but his genial side slips when they later bump into someone who owes him money. As the day progresses, Tony and his film crew will learn far more than they bargained for about K's life, his family, and morals.

First off, we need to apologise for being rather cagey about certain aspects of the film's plot. It's far better to go in with as few expectations as possible to truly appreciate what is about to transpire. However, we will say that for ninety minutes, the viewer is sent on a rollercoaster of emotions and certainly by the half-way point, it's edge-of-the-seat terrifying, something that doesn't let up. Once we're introduced to K's associates, particularly Daz (Travers) and Terese (Ryan), things quickly escalate to become white-knuckle viewing. They are both terrifically deranged, making the spectacle as unpredictable as it is enthralling. Writer/director Jason Figgis also makes an imposing appearance as the disturbing 'Babyface', who manages to hammer home a point or two.

As mentioned, Figgis' film defies preconceptions on almost every level. Thankfully, it's not presented in a 'found footage' manner - the addition of the score, in particular, really underpins some scenes and draws one in as it should - but maintaining the urgency of a documentary, the viewer is made to feel part of the situation, almost complicit, questioning our motives as much as the characters. Impeccably played by all involved, this is definitely a film worth seeking out, and one that distributors would be crazy to overlook.



ON THE

BY ED FORTUNE



WHEN DARK MATTER FIRST BURST ON TO OUR TV'S, THE GENERAL RESPONSE WAS PRETTY MIXED. THE INITIAL SET-UP WAS A LOVING MASH-UP OF SCI-FI CLICHÉS, AFTER ALL. HOWEVER, MOST OF US SWIFTLY GREW TO LOVE THE CREW OF THE RAZA, SO IT'S WITH SOME EXCITEMENT THAT WE APPROACH THE DVD RELEASE OF SEASON TWO OF THIS FUN, ENSEMBLE CAST SCI-FI SHOW...

For those who don't know the show at all, the set-up is pretty much what we've come to expect from mid-budget Canadian science fiction shows; we have a crew of badassess, all with mixed and troubled pasts who happen to work together on a rather nifty spaceship (called the Raza). The team flies around space, doing jobs for corporations and individuals in a dystopian future.

Dark Matter began life as a script for a TV series which swiftly got turned into a graphic novel by Dark Horse Comics in 2012. The book, *Dark Matter: Rebirth*, bears more than a passing resemblance to the show. Not only is the plot pretty much the same as that of the pilot, but the artwork has also seemingly been used as a bit of a casting guide. It's come a long way since then.

Season One began with the crew waking up in status pods with no idea who they are or how they've come to be. What they did know is that (with one exception) each has a mean reputation and an extraordinary capacity and skill for mayhem and violence. Unaware of even their own names, they spent much of Season One going by the numbers. By the end of the season, however, we had learned a heck of a lot about the heroes and the choices that they had made. The season ended with the crew's origins revealed, and the team having to live with the consequences of a life of crime. Let's take a quick look at the story so far, through the eyes of the individual characters.

Jace Corso, aka One (Marc Bendavid), began as the sympathetic, pretty boy character. Think of him as the nice guy of the show, the Simon Tam or Roj Blake.

With his big soulful eyes and soft voice, in Season One we learned that Bendavid's character wasn't really like the other boys; he was, in fact, someone who had infiltrated the group with an ulterior motive and a sense of moral superiority. Those hoping to see One's pretty, pretty face may be disappointed to learn that he isn't in the new season much as Bendavid is doing movies now, but his short appearances are spectacular.

Broadway actress Melissa O'Neil began the show with the name of Two and was revealed to be called Rebecca (though fans of numbers will be pleased to learn that they continue to use the numeral names as nicknames). Two's journey was both the least interesting and most remarkable. The crew's default leader, Rebecca is pretty much indomitable, and her backstory is expanded in Season Two, forming much

RAZA'S EDGE



of the backbone of the new season's plot. Expect intrigue, violence and a surprisingly villainous walk-on part for Will Wheaton as the man responsible for all of Rebecca's trouble.

The gun-toting, gum-chewing, surly bad-ass known as Three was revealed to be called Marcus Boone; an appropriate name for a mean man with a big firearm. Boone is played by Anthony Lemke, who is essentially Canada's version of Bill Paxton. (You will have seen Lemke before in every other show, toting a gun). Fans of lumbering oafs armed with sarcasm, a twinkle in their eye and a willingness for violence will not be disappointed by Season Two; Boone does what Boone does.

Action actor Alex Mallari Jr. returns as Ryo Tetsuda, aka Four. He also gets much more action in this new season. Freed from Amnesia, Tetsuda finds himself swiftly

yearning for the simpler time when he didn't know who he was. Stepping up from the strong silent type with exotic martial weapons skills into a leadership style lieutenant role, Tetsuda's pseudo-feudal Japanese people are in trouble, and it's up to Four to decide what his role in all that will become.

Actress Jodelle Ferland was able to use last season of *Dark Matter* to step away from the other main acting role as the ill-fated Bree from the *Twilight* series. Her character, Five (aka Emily), grew up during the first season to be a gutter-rat orphan hero with amazing hacking and technical skills. Rather than simply being 'The Kid' or the ship's mascot, one could argue that the show is really all about Five. The new season sees more information on exactly why she's on the run and also places her in deep trouble. With no family, no money and no crew to back her up, Five begins the show about to put in care. Which, in a world run by self-interested corporations (rather than governments), is sure to be a dreadful thing.

Former stunt man Roger Cross is used to playing bruisers (and has done so in many of Syfy's other shows) and his performance as the practical and stoic Six really suits him. He shocked us all in Season One, and though he's a lot less relevant in the next season, he still packs a punch.

Fans of comic actress Zoie Palmer will be pleased to learn that her character of The Android gets more limelight, and we finally get some exploration into what it means to be an AI in a world where most people are pretty much slaves anyway.

The new season also casts some new crew, namely Shaun Sipos as Devon Talthred, a surgeon with a complicated past and Melanie Liburd as Nyx Harper, another kick-ass leading lady who plays off well against the character of Rebecca.

Storywise, the show is beginning to relax its arc-plotting a little bit. Not only do we get raids on corporate strongholds, but we also get extended space battles, growing overtures of war, and in one memorable episode, a quick trip to an 'evil' dimension. But this is *Dark Matter*; evil is what you bring with you.



DARK MATTER Season Two has just finished airing on Syfy and Amazon Prime, and will be available on DVD on October 17th

DARK MATTER

REVIEWS

THE LATEST BIG
SCREEN GENRE
RELEASES REVIEWED
AND RATED



SAUSAGE PARTY

CERT: 15 / DIRECTORS: CONRAD VERNON, GREG TIERNAN / SCREENPLAY: SETH ROGEN, EVAN GOLDBERG, ARIEL SHAFFIR, KYLE HUNTER / STARRING: SETH ROGEN, KRISTEN WIIG, JONAH HILL, BILL HADER, JAMES FRANCO, DANNY MCBRIDE, EDWARD NORTON, SALMA HAYEK, MICHAEL CERA / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Some films can be sold by concept alone, be it one-joke dross like *Sharknado* or something spectacularly insane like *Panique Au Village*. These movies require no more than a plot synopsis or trailer to inspire a viewing; with Conrad Vernon and Greg Tiernan's new animated comedy, penned by Seth Rogen, Evan Goldberg and the gang, this is certainly the case. For if Rogen and co. were all not baked (and we are not talking Aunt Bessie here) when writing and voicing this motion picture, we would certainly have severe misgivings about their sanity. *Sausage Party* is what it says on the tin, for better and for worse.

Set in the fictitious Shopwell's supermarket, the film sees wiener Frank (Rogen) starting another day, as all the food on the shelves break out into song, hoping and praying to be chosen by the gods (customers) and go to the great beyond. However, when Frank and his bun girlfriend Brenda (Kristen Wiig) are chosen, they are thrown into an unexpected adventure, and in the process Frank uncovers the horrifying truth behind "the great beyond". Blending animated tropes with firebrand satire and simply filthy comedy, *Sausage Party* is *Toy Story* as envisioned by a high-as-fuck Asda clerk.

From the offset, the swearsy script loads in the grossness and smut and while this will be enough to discourage some immediately – if easily offended, steer clear – the film does actually back up its dirty mouth with some very interesting debates. In a film where Nazism and war are passing gag material and the core villain is a juiced up Douche (Nick Kroll)... in every sense of the word, you may not be expecting much depth but *Sausage Party* does have a lot to say. The narrative dissects the ideas of organised religion, faith itself, sexual politics, and existentialism, and even has many references to real world racial tensions (Israel and Palestine in particular). For all the vulgarity, there is also an all-welcoming core to this adult animation and while it feels preachy at times, this atheist animated adventure is never less than interesting or barmy.

The jokes come thick and fast and hit and miss just as frequently; there are times here when swearing is just inserted as a make-do comic routine and where the film slips into the atypical stoner shtick that Rogen has become known for. *Sausage Party* does its best to make you think (and does) but at times forgets to keep making you laugh. However, for all the shelf-filling supporting characters – some of whom are really there to aid a joke and nothing more,

the best of whom are Michael Cera's Barry, Scott Underwood's Stephen Hawking-like Gum and Salma Hayek's lesbian Taco Teresa – and uneven moments, the film is often funny (even if you sometimes feel ashamed to have laughed) and worth the trip just for the sheer madness of seeing a world where a talking used condom, a food gangbang and a *Chicken Run*-like series of rebellion set pieces, are commonplace.

It's weird, it's wild and its trailer does show some of the best bits, but *Sausage Party* still comes served with a lot of themes, far-reaching ideas and a neat fourth wall breaking final twist that reminds a little of *The Lego Movie*'s final punch, albeit far more self-deprecating. *Sausage Party* could be better and more tightly delivered but for what its worth, the film rewards fans with a stomach for gross out, as well as offering some large themes to indulge in. True, it's rendered with broad strokes, but it's still worth feasting on... if for no other reason than to say you have seen it! We'll never look at a Lavash or Bagel the same way again.

JACK BOTTOMLEY

EXPECTED ★★★★★★★★ 8

ACTUAL ★★★★★★★★ 7



THE GREASY STRANGLER

CERT: TBC / DIRECTOR: JIM HOSKING / SCREENPLAY: TOBY HARVARD, JIM HOSKING / STARRING: MICHAEL ST. MICHAELS, SKY ELOBAR, ELIZABETH DE RAZZO / RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER 7TH

Here comes a new cult favourite on the way. It certainly is a movie that this particular writer will have to watch again to get a greater sense of its place, both in the horror genre and cinema itself.

Elijah Wood and Ben Wheatley lend their producer credits to *The Greasy Strangler*, which on first impressions appears to be influenced by the likes of early John Waters and the best of Troma. It certainly doesn't mince words or ideas and at a fair ninety minutes or so, will certainly be one to look at again and again to deduce its ideas.

Geek Big Brayden lives with his father Big Ronnie in an L.A. shack, where they organise disco-themed tours of the local community with all manner of deceitful lies (one of the key phrases that comes out of their mouths is 'Bullshit Artist', which can be heard umpteen times throughout). Ronnie, however, does seem to have a fetish for excess grease on his food (a point that Gordon Ramsay would not take lightly in the grand scheme of things), which also provokes an extreme side-effect, transforming him into the titular 'Greasy Strangler'. The relationship between father and son gets complicated when a big woman called Janet who they meet on one of their tours decides to go out with Brayden, much to the chagrin of Ronnie, who has also taken a fancy to her...

The Greasy Strangler is a traditional gross-out comedy horror. It certainly was the strangest viewing experience this writer has had since the very first *Human Centipede* and *American Mary*

at a past FrightFest. The film is a little uneven in terms of performances and some repetitive dialogue at times, but there is a rather peculiar charm within that provides sufficient attention to the intended audience, which is why in time the film may gain a suitable cult following amongst horror fans.

The use of the female Janet is clearly a nod to Waters with people like Tracy in *Hairspray* and the Strangler himself is reminiscent of Troma's *The Toxic Avenger*. There are some cheap and cheerful gore effects like the heady days of *Re-Animator* three decades before and you probably will not look at grease in the same way after viewing this film.

There is a lot of potential in the concept and yet it is an example of a film that suffers from its low-budget foundation. It could benefit from more laughs and extreme horror à la *Evil Dead* and *Brain Dead* in addition to that which is on show here. That said, there are some moments of gross sexual interaction that compensate and provide humour also.

On balance, though, *The Greasy Strangler* is a reasonable offering.

JOHN HIGGINS

EXPECTED ★★★★★★★★ 7

ACTUAL ★★★★★★★★ 6





THE MAN WHO FELL TO EARTH

CERT: 18 / DIRECTOR: NICOLAS ROEG / SCREENPLAY: PAUL MAYERSBERG / STARRING: DAVID BOWIE, RIP TORN, CANDY CLARK, BUCK HENRY / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

A critic once cruelly stated that if David Bowie could have tried to act his way out of a paper bag, he would have died of suffocation. Not that we want to disrespect the dead, but his cinematic legacy is not as solvent as his musical one and at times it is a little hit and miss whenever you come to any of the Bowie filmography, either in a repeat viewing or a first time, as we did with the film we're about to review.

Bowie was a true enigma whatever he did and at times his films were (and still are) both frustrating and satisfying in their content. The best of them, *Merry Christmas* (1983) and *Labyrinth* (1986), were the right blend and well suited to what he was capable of. That said, I am sure there are fans out there who will doubtlessly bring up other films of his career to agree to disagree.

The Man Who Fell To Earth, Nicolas Roeg's 1976 adaptation of a novel by Walter Tevis, has grown to become a cult classic amongst both sci-fi and Bowie fans. This new 4K restoration is a crisp and clear opportunity to sense the artistic and stylistic intent within.

Bowie plays an alien, Thomas Jerome Newton, who has come to Earth to replenish the depleted water stocks of his home planet. He has brought along advanced technology to patent many inventions and becomes a Bill Gates-like figure as part of a conglomerate, World Enterprises, aided by attorney Oliver Farnsworth (Buck Henry). He strikes up a relationship with a girl, Mary-Lou (Candy Clark) and begins to immerse himself amongst American culture, before his secret is revealed and a dark fate awaits him....

Although *The Man Who Fell To Earth* remains one of the truly visual stimulants of the 1970s (and will certainly attract many fans old and new who are keen to discover and re-discover the legacy and power that Bowie had over the creative world and audience), it has become a rather bemusing and flat emotional experience, which can be interpreted as a post-psychedelic analysis of disharmony, or a potent comment on the rise of Corporate America. Not to be too critical of any movie that does attempt to bring a new perspective and vision, perhaps a second or third viewing will reveal the essence and impact of Roeg's film.

Part of the problem is Bowie himself, who stutters his way through the role and seems misplaced in it. Given his

obsession thematically through songs like *Space Oddity*, *Life on Mars* and *Starman*, at first glance he seemed to be right choice, but what may be expressed perfectly well in a three-minute song doesn't quite translate as well over 138 minutes in the cinema. Support-wise, Candy Clark, Rip Torn and Buck Henry are perfectly cast in their respective roles.

The key strength of the film, which is faultless, lies in its cinematography and contrast, capturing New Mexico in its sparse splendour.

JOHN HIGGINS

EXPECTED ++++++ 6

ACTUAL ++++++ 6



REVIEWS



THE WALKING DEAD: SEASON 6

DVD + BD / CERT:18 / STARRING: ANDREW LINCOLN, NORMAN REEDUS, STEVEN YEUN, LAUREN COHAN, CHANDLER RIGGS, DANAI GURIRA, MELISSA MCBRIDE / RELEASE DATE: SEPTEMBER 6TH

"I know this sounds insane, but this is an insane world" states Rick (Andrew Lincoln) at the beginning of *The Walking Dead's* sixth season. It's certainly a fitting opening for a season that features more zombies, more bloodshed and more fatalities than ever before.

First Time Again picks up from where the dramatic Season Five finale left off as black-and-white flashbacks show the residents of Alexandria in the aftermath of the bloody town meeting. In the present, Rick and co discover a quarry jam-packed with walkers and Rick devises a plan to divert the undead away from Alexandria's direction. This season premiere is a thoroughly satisfying opener, providing impressive spectacle, bursts of explosive action and engaging character interplay. The intelligent use of black-and-white footage also adds an intriguing visual depth to events.

The first half of season six solely deals with the fall-out of Rick's plan and a simultaneous attack on Alexandria by a murderous gang called the Wolves. This tight focus helps sustain a palpable sense

of danger throughout and allows each of the now extensive cast to receive a decent amount of exploration. Rick's multifaceted relationship with both Deanna (Tovah Feldshuh) and Morgan (Lennie James) particularly stand out. In fact, Morgan becomes one of the most interesting characters, adding an emotional weight to the show. His stand-alone episode *Here's Not Here*, which explores how he went from psycho to pacifist, is a season highlight. A contemplative, compelling and insightful study of what it means to be human in a world leached of its humanity, *Here's Not Here* is a surprise gem.

The only misjudgement of this first half of is the deceitful handling of one characters' fate but an unpredictably brutal and altogether thrilling mid-season finale more than makes up for this. *No Way Out* sees the residents of Alexandria stand-off against an overwhelming horde of walkers and it's television at its very best - filled with jaw-dropping developments, gripping action and a dizzyingly entertaining edge-of-your-seat montage.

Unfortunately, TWD has long been characterised by inconsistency and that doesn't change here as an impressive beginning on the season gives way to a lacklustre and ponderous second half which sees the group expanding their connections with other communities. While on a supply run Daryl and Rick encounter a masked individual named Jesus, a member of the Hilltop colony, who is interested in beginning trade with Alexandria. Rick and co soon discover that a violent and authoritative group called The Saviors are exploiting Hilltop's resources and conflict soon ensues...

There's a distinct lack of narrative drive in this latter half and the show spends too much time pre-occupied with setting The Saviors up as the next big bad for season seven. Consequently, the show gets somewhat bogged down in lethargy and doesn't match the sharpness of its opening nine episodes. Despite this, there are some thoughtful considerations on the consequences of violence on the human soul and Carol (Melissa McBride) is at the forefront of these existential questions. Her character has undertaken quite a remarkable journey from a helpless, vulnerable widow to one of the strongest and most versatile survivors in the group. She remains one of the most unique, intriguing and complex characters in TWD and on television today.

The season finale *Last Day on Earth*, which introduces one of TWD's most notorious villains, is the season's most major disappointment. It's an extremely poorly-executed, bloated and directionless episode which builds to one of the most infuriating and cheap cliff-hangers you are likely to encounter. The only positive is that Jeffrey Dean Morgan looks fantastically evil as Negan, it's just a shame his introduction is so laboured and clumsy.

All that aside, with season seven looming, we're intrigued to see where the nefarious Negan will take TWD next.

Extras: Deleted Scenes / Inside The Walking Dead / The Making of The Walking Dead / In Memoriam / 601: Out of the Quarry / Guts & Glory: The Death of Nicholas / Strength In Bonds / Negan: Someone to Fear / The Face Of Death: Iconic Walkers of the Season

LUKE CHANNELL

★★★★★★★7



COWBOY ZOMBIES

DVD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR: PAUL WINTERS / SCREENPLAY: GAHAN WILSON, PAUL WINTERS / STARRING: JAROD ANDERSON, GREG BRONSON, KIERA CROUCH, MATT E. DERDIVANIS / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

As Greek myth would have it, Hercules, the half mortal son of Zeus, was driven mad by the queen of the gods, Hera, and murdered his wife and children. Upon regaining his sanity, Hercules was understandably distraught and in penance for his crime undertook 12 labours for the King Eurystheus. These labours included fighting and defeating immense, dangerous creatures and completing impossible tasks. We mention this because we think Hercules

would probably still have chosen any of those tasks, even capturing Cerberus, the three-headed hound of Hades guarding the gates of the underworld, than try and find something positive to say about Cowboy Zombies. But if our mother told us anything growing up, it was "Son, you're a better man than that Hercules", so here goes...

The history of cinema is full with tales of enterprising filmmakers, light on resources

and funds, turning out movies that run the whole gamut from the offensive to the inept to miraculously good and even game changing (Roger Corman being an industry covering all of those himself). Cowboy Zombies is not game changing. It's not miraculously good. In fairness, it's not offensive (for reasons we'll mention later). It is inept. We appreciate the context this movie was probably made in, family and friends getting together to make a zombie-western flick on the weekends, having a great time acting out their fantasies of wild west and horror movie clichés. Still, when a film is released to the wider world it becomes open to a critical assessment that need only really consider the finished product.

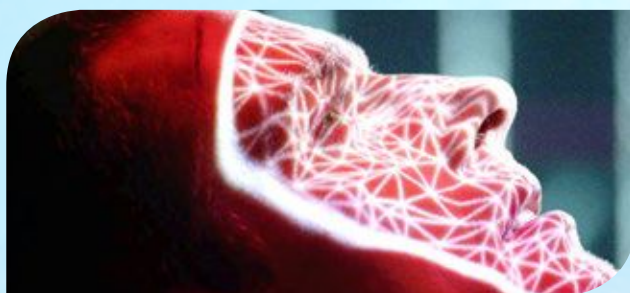
The acting is, charitably, game but often toe-curling and no one's going to be troubling Mark Rylance for the lead in Spielberg's next movie any time soon. Clunky writing abounds. It's a walking dead film but the gore-free make-up here is more like the 'zombies' lost a flour and ketchup fight. It's cumbersome, unwieldy, poorly paced. The editing is off, sometimes by seconds that drag by like hours.

It's an over-scored, messy, incoherent shambling corpse of a film. To part with money for it, perhaps hoping for an entertaining evening of scares and thrills, would be cruel disappointment.

Nobody likes to be cruel though (well, Simon Cowell does, and Sir Alan Sugar, Katie Hopkins... actually plenty of people enjoying being cruel come to think of it) so let's discuss why, despite everything, Cowboy Zombies isn't offensive. It's awkward and ungainly, but often absolutely hilariously so. We LOL'd (as the kids would have it these days) more during this film than we do during something that's *meant* to be funny. We don't think anyone involved in this film is taking it or themselves too seriously, at least we hope not. They probably had a cracking time making it, and that's great for them. For you? Not so much. Unless this sort of so-bad-it's-good thing is your bag, in which case, have at it.

JAMIE EVANS

★★★★★ 3



IDENTICALS

DVD + BD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR: SIMON PUMMELL / SCREENPLAY: SIMON PUMMELL / STARRING: LACHLAN NIEBOER, NORA-JANE NOONE / RELEASE DATE: AUGUST 22ND

A British/Dutch co-production, *Identicals* is the first non-documentary feature of Simon Pummell, a professor at the Willem de Kooning Academy in Rotterdam. It shares the fascination with personal histories that informed his 2003 documentary *Bodyson* (notable for including Jonny Greenwood's debut film soundtrack), and the amount of thought that has gone into this project is very much in evidence. Unfortunately, its obsession with striking visuals and philosophical questions

of identity serve to undermine the film's humanity, and the result is a glacial and alienating experience that is easy to admire but very difficult to embrace.

The conceit is rather opaque and deliberately ill-explained; the Brand New-U organisation exists to transplant unfulfilled individuals into the bodies of identical strangers in order to effectively start again and maximise their potential. When Slater's girlfriend undergoes one such relocation he is left with a choice of being blamed for her murder or undertaking a brand new life

himself. Of course, he takes the latter option, and the film follows his progress through two parallel existences as he attempts to track Nadia down and revive their relationship.

There are a number of storytelling decisions that strive to imbue the film with the profundity it seems to feel it earns; in their new bodies, the characters retain the names and faces associated with the old, while many of the choices – both in-fiction and on the production – seem designed to serve the director's vision despite feeling entirely contrived. The acting is distant and the dialogue is brutally minimal. The consequence of this is to give *Identicals* a level of abstraction that makes it almost impossible to follow as a straightforward narrative, and when a film is as visually intangible as this there is very little for an audience to identify with. The look is of an antiseptic *Blade Runner* while the tone is similar to Aronofsky's *The Fountain* but divested of any warmth. It is, essentially, *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* as if

made by robots.

The greatest influences on *Identicals*, however, are clearly the 1997 film *Abre los Ojos* (the inspiration for *Vanilla Sky*; Pummell even includes the line 'Open your eyes' in the dialogue twice) and *THX 1138*. The difference with George Lucas' debut was that he created a universe of which the impersonal characters and stark visuals were a logical extension, while Amenábar's film was a story about internalised crisis which allowed its external expression its figurative irregularities.

Both of those films created coherent universes in which it was possible to care about the people therein; *Identicals* is an aloof, distancing puzzle with an all too obvious solution, an occasionally breathtaking visual endeavour, but sadly one that is fatally uninvolved for the viewer.

Extras: interviews, visual effects breakdown

JR SOUTHALL

★★★★★ 6



SCOOPY DOO & WWE: CURSE OF THE SPEED DEMON
 DVD / PG / DIRECTOR: TIM DIVAR / SCREENPLAY: ERNIE ALTBACKER /
 STARRING: FRANK WELKER, MATTHEW LILLARD, THE MIZ, THE UNDERTAKER,
 TRIPLE H, SHEAMUS, RUSEV / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Finally, the eagerly anticipated sequel to Scooby-Doo! WrestleMania Mystery arrives in a new explosive and entertaining crossover; Scooby-Doo! and WWE: Curse of the Speed Demon. The 26th film in the Scooby-Doo! direct-to-video series features a superstar cast of some of WWE's best athletes, including The Undertaker, Triple H and even the Bulgarian brute himself, Rusev.

Not content with entertaining the WWE Universe inside a wrestling ring, Vince McMahon ventures out further by creating a racing

competition. However, this attracts a mysterious demon who threatens to disrupt the race at any cost. To investigate the matter, Vince hires the help of Mystery Inc.

The story isn't necessarily phenomenal by any standards, but it's aided by a script that will at least garner some laughs, especially from WWE's younger audience. Scooby and Shaggy eventually find themselves teaming up with The Undertaker, whose previous partner, the late Dusty Rhodes, is injured by the deadly Speed Demon.

The cast is sure to

appease any of the younger fans who have a favourite, as The Miz, Paige, Lana, Stephanie McMahon, Kofi Kingston, Sheamus, Goldust and Stardust, and even Los Matadores all make an appearance. Perhaps the inclusion of WWE's ex-Shield members would've been appropriate but unfortunately, like John Cena, they're not seen here.

Thankfully, despite being a direct-to-DVD sequel, the animation style provides decent designs for these wrestlers. For example, Paige and Rusev really fit into the animation style of the Scooby-Doo universe, by exaggerating their body structure and facial features in all the right places.

However, the car models seem like an afterthought. The cars are slightly modelled on the drivers, such as Triple H's aptly named 'Company Car', but they just don't have the same polish that the 2D animation boasts. Still, the races are explosive enough to keep younger fans happy.

Perhaps not surprising to many, but The Miz provides the best performance from the entire roster. He gives it his all, which truly confirms his status as an A-list Hollywood actor. Triple H and Stephanie also provide a

commendable voice-acting role, and Vince McMahon channels himself perfectly.

The reveal of the Speed Demon is a tad underwhelming, but it's so ridiculous that it works within the realm of Scooby-Doo mysteries. Some members of the WWE Universe may assign an identity to the demon based on the car design, but there aren't many surprises had here.

It's an almost perfect mash-up for children who enjoy both Scooby-Doo and WWE. Shaggy and Scooby get stuck into their usual hijinks, and the addition of wrestlers such as The Undertaker helps build the angle they're going for. Fans would never have assumed that The Undertaker would partake in such an amusing role, but then again that's why it works.

The story is serviceable, the animation is decent, and it's a small treat to see Dusty Rhodes appear in the film after his unfortunate passing. It also provides Michael Cole's best performance on commentary in his entire career. It's ideal for children, and entertaining enough to keep the older fans happy.

MATT WELLS

★★★★★★★ 7



THE REDEEMER

DVD + BD / CERT: 18 / DIRECTOR: ERNESTO DIAZ ESPINOZA / SCREENPLAY: ERNESTO DIAZ ESPINOZA, GULLERMO PRIETO, ANDREA SANZ, DIEGO AYALA / STARRING: MARKO ZAROR, LORETO ARAVENA, JOSE LUIS MOSCA, MAURICIO DIOCARÉS, NOAH SEGAN / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

The Redeemer, "the most feared man in Latin America," is a vigilante warrior on a perpetual mission, travelling to one anonymous place after another, defending innocent townsfolk from thugs and criminals while he hunts for the villainous Scorpion.

The Redeemer is a

quintessentially mysterious character, distant, brooding and with only the briefest of human interaction, he speaks only when necessary and in short, succinct sentences, never saying any more or any less than is required. He is made even more intriguing by his rituals prior to commencing combat, first

praying at a makeshift portable altar and playing a round of Russian roulette as though asking God for permission to continue. Even as he squares off with the groups of thugs he genuinely tries to end the fights before they begin, quietly suggesting to "Get on your knees and ask God for forgiveness." Of course, none of them do, so we are then treated to some fast, brutal and superbly choreographed fight sequences, usually against multiple opponents of varying levels of menace.

As the eponymous warrior, Marko Zaror has a physicality to his presence that comes from more than just his sculpted physique. His blend of various fighting styles lets him move with speed, strength and agility, and he radiates an aura of raw power similar to the likes of Scott Adkins or Gary Daniels. Without the aid of CGI or wirework to augment them, the fights are instead a mix of balletic grace and extreme violence, with bottles smashed in mid-air

and then stabbed into throats, or faces rammed into spinning propeller blades.

With an uncompromising attitude and willingness to stand up to criminals most people are terrified of, the Redeemer comes off as a street-level superhero like Daredevil, Punisher or Green Arrow, his tattered hooded jacket even acting like a basic cowl. He lives in cheap motels and drives a rusting car quite literally held together with duct tape, as though allowing himself any kind of material comfort would be a distraction from his mission. Speaking of which, as the truth behind what inspired the Redeemer to begin his eternal rampage, you begin to question who exactly it is who requires redemption. Redeemer may be a short and uncomplicated film, but that doesn't stop it from being distinctive and highly enjoyable.

ANDREW MARSHALL

★★★★★★★ 9



THESE FINAL HOURS

DVD + BD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR & SCREENPLAY: ZAK HILDITCH / STARRING: JESSICA DE GOUW, NATHAN PHILLIPS, DAVID FIELD, LAUREN CLEARY / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Once again, we have a film that heralds the apocalypse; but forget about such balderdash as 2012 cause *These Final Hours* is something else entirely. This is a stark and brutal vision of a world on the brink of annihilation, hope is completely abandoned and chaos is unleashed. But at the core of this film is the theme of redemption, even if it comes at a very painful price. This film shows us that even though the end of the world showcases the worst aspects of humanity, it can sometimes bring out the best within us, and that is clearly the case with our main protagonist, James.

When we are introduced to

him, he is portrayed as being selfish and arrogant after abandoning his pregnant lover, Zoe, so that he doesn't feel anything when the end comes, but it's only after he encounters a young girl that's separated from her father that he is finally redeemed and appreciate those closest to him. The film doesn't spend too much time delving into backstory seeing as it's all deliberately left out, solely because writer/director Zak Hilditch wanted use ambiguity as a means of heightening the mystery of the apocalyptic firestorm and to mainly focus on the core human elements at play. Plus, Hilditch definitely

has the balls to make the apocalypse itself inevitable to stop instead of doing the contrived Hollywood plot device of stopping it just in time, which would only render all dramatic integrity pointless. This is used as a way of saying that in the end, we are not in control, that nature is our ultimate destroyer, that the scariest thing to face is the feeling of powerlessness to stop it and how it can turn good people cruel.

The cinematography by Bonnie Elliott is stunning; perfectly capturing the sweltering heat getting hotter and you almost feel the humid claustrophobia getting worse by the minute. The performances across the board are all excellent with Nathan Phillips adding real layers and intrigue to the central role of James and he makes us bond more and more with him as the film goes on. Despite her role basically being a glorified cameo, Jessica de Gouw is emotionally raw in the few scenes she has, and the film could've really benefited by having flashback sequences of her time with James to add more emotional weight to proceedings. However, the real standout has to be rising star Angourie Rice, who delivers a real star-making performance

as the young child who becomes James' emotional anchor throughout the film. She handles the powerfully dramatic moments efficiently well with the vulnerability coming across as genuinely real and heartfelt, without it becoming contrived or forced. After delivering strong performances in this and the recently released *The Nice Guys*, you can tell that big things are expected to happen in her future, and there's no doubt that she'll appear in a Marvel movie at some point in the near future.

These Final Hours is an emotionally-wrought and powerful, if somewhat flawed film with rough edges. The pacing and storytelling gets bogged down during the party sequence and having Jessica de Gouw in a glorified cameo role is deeply unfortunate considering just how amazing she was in the few minutes she had, however, this is still a solid film with powerful themes and messages, stunning visuals, and a breakout performance from Angourie Rice. Just a shame then that there has to be an American remake soon...

RYAN POLLARD

★★★★★★★★★★ 8



VAMPYRES (2016)

DVD / CERT 18 / DIRECTOR: VICTOR MATELLANO / SCREENPLAY: VICTOR MATELLANO / STARRING: CAROLINE MUNRO, VERONICA POLO, ANTHONY ROTSA / RELEASE DATE: SEPTEMBER 5TH

Ah, the 70s... It might seem (to crib from a moderately popular film of that decade) 'A long time ago...' but really it's not so different these days: dubious wars, political upheaval, financial crises, immigrants, casual sexism and racism, and the threat of imminent destruction (then: nuclear apocalypse, now a demented Wotsit inching closer to being the Most Powerful Man in the World). Misogyny is still going strong too, though it's arguably of a different flavour now. One

thing we have left back there in the main is old-school horror of the Hammer-like variety. In the early part of the disco decade, with censorship relaxing and profits diminishing, Hammer was still making much the same film as nearly a decade or two before, but adding lesbianism and boobs to pull punters in. Other studios and filmmakers also took note of trends and one such feature was 1974's *Vampyres*. As with many films of the time it has developed a cult appeal. *Vampyres*

(subtitled pointlessly for the UK market with 'Lust for Blood'... it's hardly going to be a *Lust for Quilting*, is it?) is a remake that's been languishing for a couple of years and is now heading straight for a budget Sainsbury's chart near you.

That doesn't automatically mean it's rubbish, though. It's got genre icon Caroline Munro in it, that was quite promising. The basic premise is the same as the original: Two female vampires pick off unsuspecting travellers, both male and female, to take back to their home for some sex, bloodletting, and ultimately death. A camping party doesn't know two of their friends are already on the list of the missing and eventually end up stumbling into the lair of the vampires (or vampyres, whatever). The original was notorious for being (even for the time) unusually graphic in both the sex and murder and was heavily cut for release. This being the modern age, writer-director Victor Matellano can expect no such censorship and so he aims full-tilt for a mix of eroticism and sadistic violence.

Whether any of this is any good is open to personal interpretation on amounts of gore and body parts necessary in a film of this kind, and how much patience you have with idiots. Take away the nudity and savagery and you're mostly left with a stupid-people-in-the-woods film (hint: if you're camping and the first night's sleep is interrupted by ominous visions of horrors ahead, perhaps consider moving on to a Butlin's or something).

On the plus side, it's nice (well, not nice, but you know what I mean) to have some actually murderous, unrepentant vampires in films again. No sparkling here, or attempts to humanise creatures of the night. For what it is, it's made well enough and mercifully short, with some attempt at the dreamlike approach of the original. If you like sex and death, nakedness and blood together, well there's lots of that. It's alright, I suppose.

JAMES EVANS

★★★★★★★★★★ 5



LEGENDS OF TOMORROW: SEASON 1

DVD + BD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR AND SCREENPLAY: VARIOUS / STARRING: ARTHUR DARVILL, VICTOR GARBER, BRANDON ROUTH, FRANZ DRAHEH, DOMINIC PURCELL, CAITY LOTZ / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Following the murder of his wife and son at the hands of gloriously named supervillain Vandal Savage in the year 2066, time traveller Rip Hunter returns to 2016 to assemble an eclectic group of superheroes in a last ditch effort to save humanity and prevent Savage from conquering the world.

Fans of parent series' Arrow and The Flash will already be familiar with Hunter's squad; Ray Palmer (Atom), Jefferson Johnson and Dr Stein (both halves of Firestorm), Mick Rory and

Leonard Snart (Heat Wave and Captain Cold), Carter Hall and Kendra Saunders (Hawkman and Hawkgirl), as well as the welcome resurrection of Sara Lance (White Canary) – but the question remains: with such an abundance of Marvel/DC products onscreen, can this PG equivalent of the Suicide Squad find its place amongst an already oversaturated market?

The answer is a resounding YES. Greg Berlanti (Arrow, The Flash, Supergirl) knows his audience and isn't afraid to give them what they want: a

colourful, funny and action-packed series that doesn't pretend to be more than it is and employs the talents of its collective cast to full effect

The series itself only consists of 16 episodes, but thankfully the story moves at such a pace that there is no time for any filler episodes. Plenty of humour punctuates the fight scenes, which grow thrillingly more inventive as the season progresses towards an explosive finale. Whilst overall light and family-friendly in tone, don't be lulled into a false sense of security; it only takes until the second episode before the team suffers the loss of one of their own. Inevitably with such a large ensemble there is a healthy dose of romantic subplots peppered with tension that divides the team and threatens the mission.

Arrowheads will be pleased with the regular cameos from the originals (a doff of the cap in particular goes to Stephen Amell's portrayal of a battle-hardened Oliver Queen in standout episode 'Star City 2046'), as the team lurches unsteadily from one time period to the next. Arthur Duvall is a swaggering bundle of charisma

as leader Rip (Duvall himself knowing a thing or two about time travel shenanigans thanks to his stint as Dr Who's assistant Rory opposite Matt Smith), and his interactions with ship's computer Gideon are a continuous highlight.

As with all shows where time-travel is the central theme, the omnipresent warnings of doom should the timeline be disrupted become a little wearing, though there's enough spice to prevent it resembling an old episode of 'Crime Traveller' (look it up, millennials). Savage, Chronos and the Time Masters are effective antagonists, though the series has yet to replicate the true villainy of Arrow's Biggest Bad, Slade Wilson.

With DC's cinematic exploits delivering one critically mauled production after another, it's the Arrowverse that continually provides the strongest competition to the Marvel juggernaut. 'Legends of Tomorrow' is a fine string to that bow.

TOMMY JAMES

★★★★★★★★★★ 9



HANGMEN ALSO DIE! (1943)

DUAL / CERT: PG / DIRECTOR: FRITZ LANG / SCREENPLAY: JOHN WEXLEY / STARRING: HAND HEINRICH VON TWARDOWSKI, BRIAN DONLEVY, WALTER BRENNAN, ARNO FREY, ANNA LEE / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Filmed in 1943, when the outcome of the Second World War was still very much in doubt, Hangmen Also Die! is based loosely upon the assassination of a high-ranking German officer called Reinhard Heyrich, an event that took place only months before the movie was made. It concentrates on the Gestapo's hunt for the assassin, Dr. Franticek Svoboda (Brian Donlevy), a physician working for the Czech resistance. Svoboda is on the run, and with the Nazis closing in fast he turns to

Mascha Novtony (Anna Lee) for help, hiding out with her family until the evening's curfew is over. But the Nazis will stop at nothing to find Heyrich's killer, rounding up hundreds of Czech citizens including Mascha's own father (Walter Brennan), and threatening to execute them if the assassin isn't handed over. Meanwhile, the resistance have discovered that one of their members, the brewer Emil Czaka (Gene Lockhart), is covertly working with the Gestapo. With Svoboda racked by guilt as the Czech hostages

begin to die, and Masha desperate to save her father, even if that means betraying Svoboda to the Gestapo, the resistance set about framing Czaka for the assassination.

Hangmen Also Die! is an impressive movie, made especially powerful because it was directed, produced and co-written by Fritz Lang, a filmmaker who fled Nazi Germany mere hours after Hitler's propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels offered him the job of heading up German film studio UFA. He eventually arrived in Hollywood in 1936 and would work there for the next twenty-one years, and although none of his American films would ever be as critically acclaimed as his earlier German movies, certain of his projects – especially Hangmen Also Die! and the 1945 noir 'Scarlet Street' – are cinematic gems that owe much to Lang's foundations as an expressionist filmmaker. For example, there are many moments during Hangmen Also Die! which recall the greatness of 'M' (Lang's use of shadow and montage – especially during a beautifully edited group interrogation sequence – and the brilliantly paranoid

conspiracy that frames Czaka) and there is a dark humour to Alexander Granach's (Granach played Knock – aka Renfield – in Murnau's 'Nosferatu') and Reinhold Schunzel's Gestapo Inspectors that is very reminiscent of Lang's 1928 thriller 'Spione'. There is also a theatricality to Hangmen Also Die! that works exceptionally well in the context of the story, and is probably largely due to Lang's co-writer Bert (Bertolt) Brecht, another German exile whose work has massively influenced world culture.

As far as presentation goes, this is an almost flawless print. The picture and sound are both perfect. Special features are few but this is definitely a case of quality rather than quantity – there's an engrossing audio commentary from film historian Richard Pena and an intriguing interview with biographer Robert Gerwarth about the real-life Reinhard Heyrich.

A fantastic package, very highly recommended.

IAN WHITE

★★★★★★★★★★ 10



MICROWAVE MASSACRE (1983)

BD + DVD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR: WAYNE BERWICK / SCREENPLAY: GRAIG MUCKLER / STARRING: JACKIE VERNON, CLAIRE GINSBERG, LOREN SHEIN / RELEASE DATE: AUGUST 15TH

Microwave ovens, with their strange vibrations and cancerous electronic waveforms, were once talked up as a sinister threat to the modern home. As things turned out, they're fairly innocuous. But let's not be too too hasty, for history is a slow burn and has exposed one dangerous side effect that perhaps only now can be fully understood: Microwave Massacre...

Filmed over a few days in 1978 but unable to find a distributor until 1983 (and when you consider how much crap was released in that period that's quite an achievement), this ultra-

cheap comedy horror curio was originally intended as a starring vehicle for comedian Rodney Dangerfield who, unsurprisingly, passed up the opportunity. Undaunted, director Wayne Berwick then cast fading stand-up Jackie "King of the Deadpan" Vernon, best known as the cartoon voice of *Frosty the Snowman*, as his kitchen-based mass killer. Smart move: he is far and away the best thing about the movie.

Vernon plays Donald, an aging construction worker with little to get excited about except a freshly cooked meal in the evening. When his demented

spouse May (Claire Ginsberg) knocks even that on the head and starts zapping everything edible in the biggest microwave you've ever seen, Donald completely loses it, murdering and dicing his wife in short order before stuffing her in the fridge. Oh, and he also wees on the carpet for some reason. Later, somewhat hungover and looking for a tasty snack, he accidentally eats a foil-wrapped chunk of wifey and - would you believe it - she tastes mighty fine. This triggers an obsessive spiral of luring loose woman back to his place, having sex with them, killing them, chopping them up, zapping them in the microwave and eating them with a giant helping of mayonnaise. By the way, best not screen this one in your University's female 'safe space', it might not get the best response.

Plenty of movies have drawn inspiration from the Ed Gein murders but they tend not to be outright comedies and for good reason. Microwave Massacre does nothing to reverse that reasoning; just about every attempt at a joke falls flat, the tone is bizarrely uneven, the performances from everyone except Vernon are practically non-existent, and the 'gruesome' dismemberment

effects make even the worst efforts of 1960s gore-lord Hershell Gordon Lewis look Oscar-worthy. But, for all that, it's an oddly lovable mess delivered with a giant wink to the audience that suggests everyone involved had an absolute blast making it.

This is confirmed by the documentary accompanying Arrow's nicely remastered print that has front the cast and crew, a motley band of brothers, looking back on the movie with a great deal of affection. Particular praise is reserved for the late Jackie Vernon's twinkling hangdog turn. Even when he's shagging, smothering and chopping with abandon, you sort of root for the old rogue. Yes, they knew they were making a stinker but, according to the director, decided to just "embrace the stupidity". Sit yourself down in of Microwave Massacre with a dangerously hot Ready Meal and you may find yourself doing the same.

Extras: Audio commentary / Making-of / Original treatment and 8-page synopsis / Trailer

MICHAEL COLDWELL

+++++ 6



FEMALE PRISONER SCORPION: THE COMPLETE COLLECTION

BD / CERT: 18 / DIRECTORS: SHUNYA ITO, YASU HARU HASEBE / SCREENPLAY: VARIOUS / STARRING: MEIKO KAJI, RIE YOKOYAMA, FUMIO WATANABE / RELEASED: OUT NOW

The Female Prisoner Scorpion film series is the story of one woman's wrath in a world that often abuses, misuses and attempts to control her. Most of the series takes place in a prison setting but the movies do shake things up by having main character Nami Matsushima make multiple escapes across the four movies. The movies themselves are bolstered by the special features on display.

Those looking for the movies to be made pristine by today's digital technology are going to be disappointed, the films contains just as much grain as they ever did. The films also look as visually spectacular as ever. Female Prisoner Scorpion takes a lot of its design cues from Japanese theatre and often sets its tone using little more than colour and light.

This approach is reflected in the character of Nami. She speaks very little and actress Meiko Kaji has to rely almost entirely on her facial expression to convey her characters feelings and intentions. Under a lesser actress this approach might not have worked but Meiko Kaji fully conveys her character's fury and manages to turn her into something truly terrifying. The plot may be a little thin in the movies but it serves its job as a structure from which the cast and the crew can work. If there is any one thing to complain about of the design it is that the appearance of the gore has not held up at all since these movies were made (during the early 70s). At one point during the first movie a prison warden suffers an attack that results in one of his eyes being gouged, but it looks as if the man has had his face smeared with play dough. Still, this is more of a nitpick than anything, it doesn't crop up much and it doesn't detract from the effectiveness of the overall design on display.

When examining collections like this one it is important to

mention the special features. Collections like these are made to commemorate certain movies and it would be disappointing if the collection didn't come with a decent set of extras. The history of the movies and how they were made are presented to viewers from a range of angles covering everything from the personal to the academic. Each movie comes with two or three such discussions and as a whole they are very comprehensive.

While certain aspects of the series may be off putting to newcomers but Female Prisoner Scorpion as a whole is tense, theatrical and imaginative. There may be shock, but there is also genuine suspense. There is cruelty, but also compassion. These may be exploitation movies but they don't torment their characters needlessly and are worth seeking out.

Extras: A excellent array of Interviews, Trailers and other special features

GARETH EVENS

+++++ 8



THE WATER MARGIN: THE COMPLETE SERIES

BD / CERT: 15 / DIRECTOR & SCREENPLAY: VARIOUS / STARRING: BURT KWOUK, ATSUO NAKAMURA, SANAE TSUCHIDA, KEI SATO, YOSHIYO MATSUO / RELEASE DATE: SEPTEMBER 5TH

Here is another cult show getting the Blu-ray treatment, courtesy of Fabulous Films. When *The Water Margin* was first screened in the UK on BBC TV in 1976 - 77, it was broadcast at a pre-watershed time when underage children would grab an opportunity on their square TV sets to see Eastern fighting and swordplay in a manner they couldn't get any other way - simply because all Bruce Lee and Kung Fu films were usually passed as suitable in the cinema for over-eighteens. This new Blu-ray release encompasses in full the complete Series 1

and Series 2 and it is a golden opportunity for old and new fans to enjoy a well-remembered show that is released here in its original dubbed broadcast, with narration by the recently departed Burt Kwouk and English voices including current chat-show favourite Miriam Margolyes. If you are into the likes *Crouching Tiger*, *Hidden Dragon* and *House of Flying Daggers*, you will lap up this epic tale.

Before we continue, though, a word of warning....

If you still possess, as you sit down to watch this collection, a mindset of a child in the late

1970s when you first saw this, be prepared for some shocking moments that are pretty much on the nose even today. Although it was aimed back in the day for family get-togethers in front of the box, it isn't really for kids, so don't allow young children to watch this. This particular writer was certainly surprised by some moments. They're not as extreme as those you might have seen in *Game of Thrones*, but for the time they were made in the early 1970s, it is a revelation to watch it today.

With Kwouk providing the voiceover throughout and filling in the blanks, *The Water Margin* - across 26 45-minute episodes - takes us back 1,000 years to when there was a corrupt and cruel government. Erstwhile warrior Lin Chung feels the effect of all this, as he kills a swordsman, is charged and then jailed at a far out prison, is freed on the way and becomes an outlaw to battle various clans over the course of the first series. Throughout, he becomes a well-known figure of strength with many an ally and foe succumbing to his skills and ideals. All manner of ploys and traps are

set and it is the backdrop to many sword-fighting and mild martial-arts violence as he tries to overthrow evil emperor Kao Chiu. All things considered, this is a large part of the fun that *The Water Margin* provides.

Keep your ears peeled as well for umpteen Far Eastern proverbs and philosophies Kwouk communicates throughout each episode, particularly at the climax after the key fighting that happens. Even if you miss an episode, they can be enjoyed individually as the same montage and voiceover introduction begins each of the 26 episodes, so it is a testament that it can be enjoyed either way. Additionally, the remastering is in its original broadcast 4:3 ratio.

So, on balance, this is a wonderful nostalgia piece which has not lost any of its impact and, given the surprising moments of violence, will possibly have more impact given the historical setting and classic framework.

JOHN HIGGINS

★★★★★★★★★★ 9



K-SHOP

DVD / CERT: 18 / DIRECTOR & SCREENPLAY: DAN PRINGLE / STARRING: ZIAD ABABA, SCOT WILLIAMS, DARREN MORFITT, REECE NOI, KRISTIN ATHERTON / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

When university student Salah returns home to Bournemouth and finds both his father and the old man's kebab shop in equal ill health, he decides to stick around to help out. The drunken excesses of out-of-town revellers that turn the city into a hedonistic war zone every night, lead to an altercation Salah's father doesn't survive, and soon afterwards he discovers a creative solution to solve the shop's dwindling meat supplies, while taking some form of vengeance on the partyers, all of whom he holds responsible for

his father's death.

Reminiscent of Danish black comedy *Green Butchers* or an updated variation on Sweeney Todd, the concept of *K-Shop* is an inventive and somewhat nauseating one, and if watching it doesn't make you hungry, it will probably make you vegetarian. However, it has difficulty expanding an intriguing start into a full-length plot, and to flesh out the story it incorporates a sort-of rivalry between Salah and an ex-Big Brother victor-turned-nightclub entrepreneur, who is thus both representative

and symptomatic of the culture of classless hedonism he endures on a nightly basis, but their interactions are sporadic and don't add up to much in the way of a cohesive narrative.

As time wears on for Salah the very essence of who he is becomes gradually eroded, each kill dragging him ever closer to the unthinking abandonment of basic human decency that he decries in the drunken revellers, ultimately threatening to turn him into the very thing he despises. Some human perspective comes in the form of hotel owner Sarah, pointing out that while the local business owners might perceive the partygoers with contempt, they're still perfectly happy to make money off their insatiable appetites for excess. It's rather telling that the periodic street shots of drinking, singing, dancing, threatening, fighting, vomiting and shagging were achieved by a mix of staged footage and the crew just walking out into Bournemouth on a weekend night with a camera and pointing it in any direction.

In contrast to the frenetic chaos assaulting the city streets, is the quiet calm of the beach

at dawn where Salah goes to dispose of the unusable parts of his kills, juxtaposing the peaceful serenity of the rolling tide with the thought of the squelching human viscera restrained within the plastic binbags set out to sea. Likewise, the external night action is finished off by early morning shots of the street cleaners removing all trace of the concluded chaos, returning the town to a state of order, while also preparing it for when the riot begins anew.

K-Shop is almost like a zombie movie, the drunks acting as mindless, slaving, monosyllabic, shambling wrecks, whose ability to interact with society has long since worn and whose only instinct is to make others into one of them. Regardless of how intentional the parallel is, the film doesn't actually judge people for their behaviour, but that's not to say it doesn't take gleeful relish in acting out precisely the kind of thing that many of us have thought about, whether we're willing to admit it or not.

ANDREW MARSHALL

★★★★★★★★★★ 7



FROM STAGE TO SCREEN

DVD / CERT: E / DIRECTOR: DEREK PYKETT / STARRING: JOSS ACKLAND, SARAH MILES, ROY DOTRICE, MICHAEL CRAIG, FREDDIE JONES / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Now here's something a little different, but really quite special – a fascinating series of intimate face-to-face interviews with twelve of Britain's best-loved actors, spanning everything from their childhoods, their earliest experiences the business, to their greatest accomplishments and the various famous names they have worked with. It's a six DVD set but don't let that put you off. Each and every one of these interviews is wonderful, and at least two or three of the interviewees will be of particular interest to STARBURST readers.

So, who's in the line-up? Well, in no particular order, it's Joss Ackland, Michael Medwin, Vera Day, Julian Glover, Michael Craig, Roy Dotrice, Sarah Miles, Lee Montague, Michael Jayston, Derren Nesbitt, Freddie Jones and Shirley Anne Field, and since we don't have the space to recount each of their conversations in detail, here are some of the highlights:

Shirley Anne Field remembering Michael Gough, Horrors of the Black Museum and a nerve-wracking dinner date with Frank Sinatra; Freddie

Jones discussing the bizarre Marat Sade and working with Clint Eastwood on Firefox; Vera Day's memories of working with Olivier and Monroe on The Prince and the Showgirl (and the fan hysteria surrounding The Woman Eater!); and Julian Glover revealing how a compliment from Spielberg during Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade probably jinxed his American film career. And the interviewees don't coast over the bad times either. When Michael Jayston talks about a long-forgotten film he made with Topol and Mia Farrow called Follow Me!, his opinion about Chaim Topol isn't particularly complimentary.

But it's Sarah Miles' contribution that is (in our opinion) the best, beginning with a life-changing religious experience while making The Sailor Who Fell from Grace with the Sea, and moving on to the 'consciousness-changing' movie The Servant, working with the comedy greats on Those Magnificent Men in their Flying Machines, and confronting Klaus Kinski during the filming of Venom, this is one of the most engaging interviews we have ever seen. And what Ms. Miles has to say about spirituality, and a recollection of the 'gift' her late husband Robert Bolt gave

her from the afterlife, is truly thought-provoking.

Each interview is generously illustrated with photographs, film clips and some pretty rare movie trailers, and even if one or two of the subjects ramble on a little bit (we're mentioning no names!), the result is still spellbinding. These actors really were part of Britain's cinematic 'golden age' and the stories they tell make the viewer nostalgic for that time when the British film industry briefly led the world. That they are willing to discuss their careers and their peers with such joy and honesty makes this as a collection that shouldn't be missed. Writer, narrator and producer Derek Pykett, together with his editor Brian Holland, should be congratulated for orchestrating and delivering this project with such finesse and, just as importantly, proceeds raised from the sale of this DVD go to two charities, the Alzheimer's Society and All Dogs Matter. What better excuse could you have to spend a few hours in the company of Britain's movie greats?

Very highly recommended.

IAN WHITE

★★★★★★★★★★10



SOUTHBOUND

DVD / CERT: 18 / DIRECTOR: VARIOUS / SCREENPLAY: VARIOUS / STARRING: CHAD VILLELLA, MATT BETTINELLI-OLPIN, KRISTINA PESIC, FABIANNE THERESE / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

We have seen good and bad horror films in the past few years (mostly bad), but Southbound is something else entirely. It follows five different stories that are sprawling and intertwined, including two criminals trying to get back home, a girl band staying at an eccentric couple's home, a man trying to get home to his wife, a brother desperately trying to save his sister, and a family vacation that ends in

bloodshed. In all of these stories, nothing ends well, and the common ground for these tales of horror is the actual ground itself and the fact that all are apparently set in one location. Referred to as "the middle of nowhere", this location is used almost as an unlikely projection of Hell itself, with demons and floating skeletal creatures looming and watching over the characters, monitoring their

every movement, and having dramatic effects on the stories that unfold.

Another connecting thread is the DJ to whom all the characters listen; this DJ seems to be aware of all their sins, struggles and hidden demons. Each and every character has a hidden secret, almost a dark omen inside of them, and as those layers bubble to the surface, the horror escalates. It's an understated kind of horror, unnerving and deeply chilling, and by the time you get to the end of the journey, you understand that the deep moral of the story is that, no matter how hard you try, karma always catches up with you. Another underlying message in all of this is that everyone has skeletons in their closet, as personified brilliantly by the eerie, floating, corporeal demons.

The design of these floating demons is outstanding; from the way they are shown in the distance to seeing their chilling design up close, all adds up to a suitably chilling menace. Also chilling is how the supporting characters who

the protagonists encounter are in some way or form demons underneath; in the penultimate story where a man tries to save his long-lost sister, we see demons in human form, and the results are unsettling, to say the least. There is some great cinematography throughout, with every single frame being unusual, precise and subtle, and the music harks back to the classic scores from the John Carpenter era of horror.

Granted, this is not the kind of movie that will appeal to everyone's tastes, as there will no doubt be some viewers left bored, confused or irritated by it, but there's no denying that Southbound is an unsettling and chilling watch. It's unique and unusual and will certainly strike certain horror crowds with an uneasy feeling of bewilderment and intrigue, and almost has the same unnerving vibe of Jonathan Glazer's Under the Skin. Not for everyone for sure, but worth a watch nonetheless.

RYAN POLLARD

★★★★★★★★★★7

'TIL DEATH DO US PART



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AUDIOSTATIC

THE LATEST NEWS
FROM THE WORLD OF
AUDIO ADVENTURES
BY TONY JONES



Wireless Theatre Company Award Frenzy

Let's just take a moment to reflect on the many awards the Wireless Theatre Company have received in 2016 alone. They've won two Audie Awards for a production of **The Jungle Book** (Best Drama and Excellence in Production), Silver for Best Drama Special at the New York Festival Awards for **Murder of Roger Ackroyd**, they won Best Audio Drama Production Company, UK at the TMT Media Awards and a Silver Ogle for Best Fantasy at the Mark Time Awards. The last of these was for **Springheel'd Jack 3**. If you've never heard this excellent series, STARBURST has an exclusive trailer available for the final episode as part of the **Blue Box Podcast #222**. The episode will be released on September 20th.

GOBBLEKNOLL and TATTY BOGLE

By the time you read this, Bafflegab's mad-yet-glorious **Baker's End: The King of Cats** will have been released. Fans will be pleased to know the next two titles have been confirmed as **Gobbleknoll Hall** (November 2016) and **Tatty Bogle** (January 2017). The plays star Tom Baker as Tom Baker (whose funeral is the main topic for **The King of Cats**) along with Katy Manning and Susan Jameson. Written by Paul Magrs, they merit a listen.

Sherwood Sound Studios

Along with the launch of their brand new adaptation of **H. G. Wells' War of the Worlds**, Martin Johnson's Everybodyelse Productions is changing its name in January 2017. It will be called Sherwood Sound Studios, but everything else should remain unchanged.

Tolkien, Tracks and Electrickery

The beginning of August gave Tolkien fans a treat in the form of **Tolkien: The Lost Recordings**. Presented on BBC Radio 4, Joss Ackland resurrected a set of recordings made for a 1968 BBC film, most of which was never used. At an hour long, this was a rare chance for fans to hear Tolkien reflecting on his life, along with reminiscences from colleagues.

Radio 4 has also been bringing us the nine-part thriller **Tracks**. It stars Romola Garai and was written by Matthew Broughton. The story weaves a tale of conspiracy, life, death and the human brain.

One final mention for Radio 4 and the play **The Electrical Venus**, written by Julia Mayhew and starring Hannah John-Kamen as Mim, the illegitimate daughter of an aristocrat and her slave, now raised by Francis P Grainger (Michael Bertenshaw) who travels round the country with a small circus. The latest act is Sebastian Fox (Mark Edel-Hunt), who delights audiences with his 'electrickery'. All very intriguing.

LUTHER ARKWRIGHT

In amongst the many news releases from Big Finish, one bears further attention – downloads are now available for **The Adventures of Luther Arkwright**. Based on the comics written and drawn by Bryan Talbot, this is worth mentioning for two reasons.

Firstly, it is a chance to pick up a David Tennant series in which he plays Luther amongst a cast including Paul Darrow as Cromwell and India Fisher as Princess Anne. The normally three-disc release is available in the UK as a download for a bargain £5.

Secondly is the implication other titles may become available for download, previously only published on CD. These include several **Bernice Summerfield** stories and the first series of **Doctor Who: Companion Chronicles**. More news as and when it happens.

BIG FINISH WE LOVE STORIES

Key titles to watch out for this month from Big Finish...

DOCTOR WHO - PHILIP HINCHCLIFFE PRESENTS VOLUME 02: THE GENESIS CHAMBER

It's a veritable **Who**-fest over at Big Finish this month, with plenty of new titles released to keep the Time Lord fans happy. First up is this Fourth Doctor-era tale written by the legendary producer of the time, Philip Hinchcliffe. Tom Baker and Louise Jameson return to reprise their roles of Doctor and Leela in a story in which the TARDIS plants the group in the midst of an alien race who reproduce via advanced technology, and an outside race of savage folk. A third force will soon put everything in jeopardy.

AVAILABLE SEPTEMBER 30th

+++

THE WAR DOCTOR VOLUME 03: AGENTS OF CHAOS

John Hurt returns as the popular War Doctor in three more tales that take place during the Time War. Jacqueline Pearce (**Blake's 7**), Neve McIntosh (**Gormenghast**), and Honeysuckle Weeks (**The Wicker Tree**) join the cast for a trio of high-octane adventures that not only see the Doctor face Daleks, but the dreaded Sontarans.

AVAILABLE SEPTEMBER 30th

+++

DOCTOR WHO - THE EARLY ADVENTURES 3.1 THE AGE OF ENDURANCE

Set among the period of the First Doctor, this story finds the TARDIS travellers materialise on a spaceship right in the midst of a war zone. Carole Ann Ford provides the narration as well as her regular character Susan, while William Russell doubles up as Ian and the Doctor.

AVAILABLE SEPTEMBER 30th

+++

DOCTOR WHO 216 - MAKER OF DEMONS

Sylvester McCoy's Doctor, Ace (Sophie Aldred), and Mel (Bonnie Langford) pay a visit to Prosper, a planet where the Doctor brokered peace decades ago, only to find the deal the Time Lord secured has actually made conditions worse.

AVAILABLE SEPTEMBER 30th

To order, or for more information, head over to bigfinish.com

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REVIEWS

THE LATEST AUDIO
RELEASES REVIEWED
AND RATED



OUTRUN (1986)

COMPOSER: HIROSHI "HIRO" KAWAGUCHI,
MASAYOSHI ISHI, MANABU NAMIKI, JANE-
EVELYN NISPEROS / LABEL: DATA DISCS /
RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Since the OutRun soundtrack showed up, we've been getting so much more accomplished. The music, released on vinyl in celebration of the driving game's 30th anniversary, is absolutely infectious and suitable for motivating you to get anything done - be it driving, racing, cruising, or otherwise, this is vigorously

energetic music. If you're familiar with OutRun, you'll know that it's held up as the platonic ideal of driving games, and a large portion of the game's success is down to the music by Hiroshi 'Hiro' Kawaguchi, Masayoshi Ishi, Manabu Namiki, and Jane-Evelyn Nisperos.

Sourced directly from the 1986 arcade machine, the music on side A is heavy and robust. These are the three cuts which you were able to select yourself when playing in the arcade to come through on the car's 'radio', as well as the Last Wave track, which would play as you entered your initials onto the scoreboard, were you good enough to rate the ranking. The mellower cuts are obviously quieter, but the way Magical Sound Shower and Splash Wave hit, they might as well be '80s club cuts, so heavy is that low end.

The music on side B is comprised of three "bonus" cuts, taken from later versions of the game. Step on Beat is from the Sony Mega Drive edition in 1991, and Cruising Line and Camino a Mu Amor come from the 2014 3DS version. Cruising Line comes closest to capturing the music of the original Kawaguchi game music, mixing as it does louche and relaxing tones with a metronomic pulse, but Step on Beat is pretty good, as well. Camino is a little too intense, and seems as if it's part of another game until its closing

minute or so, which incorporates a sort of digital marimba. Then, it rightly secures its place in the OutRun world.

The packaging on Out Run is absolutely sick. The jacket has a die-cut front, and inside there's three different images which allow you to decide which driving stage you want your LP to portray: the beach, Death Valley, or Devil's Canyon. The text is all in both English and Japanese, with an obi strip to really complete the impression that this is a real-deal product. Data Discs have officially licensed this music from Sega, and the devotion the label has to making their product look like something which might've been imported directly from overseas is astonishing. There's a lovely little essay from composer Kawaguchi, as well, expressing his delight that OutRun is once again available on vinyl.

We're rather excited, as well. From music to production to packaging, this is the ultimate edition of OutRun music. Data Discs has once again shown themselves to be the preeminent purveyors of classic video game sounds, and it's going to be hard for anyone - themselves included - to top this release.

NICK SPACEK

★★★★★★★★★ 9



CASTLEVANIA (1986)

COMPOSER: KINUYO YAMASHITA, SATOE
TERASHIMA / LABEL: MONDO / RELEASE DATE:
OUT NOW

Knowing that Mondo's Castlevania 10-inch vinyl release is just the first of five releases only makes it that much sweeter to put on the turntable. While hearing the theme music coming from a quality, non-bootleg release is amazing in and of itself,

the work the label did on this release is just wonderful.

While video game music on vinyl is the hot thing these days, an entire LP starts to feel a little exhausting. Twelve tracks and about fifteen minutes is just about the right amount of time for these releases, and putting them on a 45rpm 10-inch vinyl EP might be the most hipster thing ever, but it sounds so good, it's impossible to hate. The fact that the tracks are cut at 45rpm lets the grooves be a bit wider, and this sounds impossibly large for music which was - for most of us - only ever heard coming out of one tiny, tinny television speaker.

The music, as composed by Kinuyo Yamashita and Satoe Terashima, still holds up. The building blocks of what would flow through every game in the series were laid here, and Vampire Killer will bring memories flooding back the instant its familiar strains come out your stereo's speakers. And, something we thought seemed patently ridiculous upon first hearing of it actually ended up being an album highlight.

That would be the last track on the first side, Walking on the Edge, which features not only music, but sound

effects from the game. It's as if you're hearing part of a level recorded onto vinyl, and yes, that does sound fairly silly - but it absolutely works. The whip cracks, kills, and power-ups sound like musical stings, and damned if it isn't the most joyful thing on the whole record.

The artwork by Becky Cloonan might look a little anime-ish on the cover, but the more you look at it, the more the background details start to pop out. Plus, once you open the gatefold (a gatefold sleeve - on a 10-inch!), and see that gorgeous reproduction of the game map, you'll fall right in love. The grey vinyl with black and white splatter for the commercial release isn't quite as exciting as the red and white split Mondo did for San Diego Comic-Con, but it sounds fantastic, so we're cool.

All told, this is a release that has us constantly refreshing Twitter and Facebook to see when the label's going to announce the next installment. We've been bitten, and we need more.

NICK SPACEK

★★★★★★★★★ 8



STRANGER THINGS: VOLUME ONE

COMPOSER: KYLE DIXON, MICHAEL STEIN / LABEL: LAKESHORE RECORDS / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

It's wonderful that we live in an age where a label can easily release all of the music for a television program, allowing us fans to dive in and really root around to see what we enjoy. Being able to curate our own soundtrack is a pretty wonderful concept, but we can only hope that, rather than going the Hannibal route, and releasing pounds of LPs for the upcoming vinyl release, we might see Kyle Dixon and Michael Stein go the route of Silva Screen's Sherlock release and give us one Stranger Things LP that is cracking good front-to-back.

The reason for that is just that there's so much music here: 70 minutes in total, and that's only the first volume, with a second hot on its tail. One can only assume that the producers are trying to strike while the iron's hot, and take advantage of the digital medium in order

to make every single piece available. Unfortunately, it's death by overload.

Here's the thing: when a film score is done, one's usually talking sixty minutes' worth of composed music for a standard two-hour film, and there's usually pop songs to add to that amount, as well. Now, consider applying that rubric to a television program.

There are roughly six and a half hours' worth of Stranger Things episodes, making for nearly three hours' worth of score. That's a lot of music. It's difficult to remember all the cues in a Christopher Nolan film such as *Interstellar*, making keeping track of eight episodes of music high-impossible, even for the most devoted score fan.

It's nice and all to have every single cue, but things like Lay-Z-Boy or Friendship aren't even tracks - they're just cues that were

likely only heard for a few seconds in the background of something, overwhelmed by dialogue. There are so many of these little snippets, and many, if not most, of them are fairly unremarkable. It's only when the composers get a chance to really stretch out that the music becomes different and unique. The shorter cues rely on standard synth tones, and while they work, they're not particularly memorable, outside the opening theme.

However, the longer pieces, such as Eleven, The Upside Down, No Weapons and the like really take advantage of the time they have and stretch out, using tones which stray from standard "1980s synth score" tropes. There are bell-like tones, stray piano notes, and bent chords: all showing how Stranger Things, in its best moments, takes all of these things with which you're familiar, and turns them into something fresh and new.

Being as how the earlier episodes - from which this music is taken - deal more in exposition than outright adventure, one can at least understand the fact that the music is rather low-key. There's not as much one can do as a composer with quiet, subtle moments, so that might account for why Dixon and Stein work so much in what might be considered clichés: plinking pianos, quietly elegiac tones, and the like.

Given that the second half of Stranger Things' run was the crazier, more exciting part, perhaps there's more adventurous music on the way. The majority of the really fun stuff came in the back end of the series, once all the exposition was out of the way, here's hoping the second volume really ups our musical interest beyond the opening theme (which, admittedly, is absolute aces).

NICK SPACEK

★★★★★★★ 6



THE SACRIFICE OF SHERLOCK HOLMES

DIRECTOR: KEN BENTLEY / AUTHOR: JONATHAN BARNES / STARRING: NICHOLAS BRIGGS, RICHARD EARL, TRACEY CHILDS, JEREMY CLYDE, JAMIE HINDE, JOE JAMESON / PUBLISHER: BIG FINISH / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

What immediately hits you about *The Sacrifice of Sherlock Holmes* is how different it is, in tempo and structure, to classic Sherlock Holmes. Holmes and Watson aren't idly waiting around for cases

in Baker Street here - rather they are thrust headlong into one high-octane adventure that spans the four episodes. Thankfully, the unorthodox approach makes for the strongest entry yet of this range.

Barnes effortlessly draws together most of the plot threads from his previous Holmes stories to provide a thoroughly thrilling conclusion. It really is recommended that you catch up with the previous releases before tackling this one - though it is perfectly possible to dive in here, you won't be able to fully appreciate the building narrative.

Continuing the jumping through Holmes' life of previous boxsets, *Sacrifice* offers a fascinating chance to see these characters removed from their natural late-Victorian/Edwardian era and placed in a broken Post-WWI London. With our heroes in a less stuffy period, we are allowed to peer closer into the private lives - in particular, Dr Watson's (third) marriage is explored far more than in all of Doyle's work.

Further deviations from Doyle occur in the hefty helping of spiritualism in the tale. This embracing of more fantastical elements might ruffle a few Holmesian feathers but it will certainly appeal to fans

of Big Finish's other ranges, like *Doctor Who* and *Dark Shadows*. Besides, all the best Holmes stories have a smidge of the supernatural anyway - *The Hound of the Baskervilles* being a case in point.

Naturally, Barnes' writing is ably supported by the talented cast, as Briggs and Earl know their way around these characters backwards by now. New listeners might find the voice of the Daleks playing the Great Detective strange at first, but Briggs' vocal dexterity quickly dispenses with any doubts. Likewise, Earl's Watson is as intelligent and endearing as the good doctor should always be, particularly excelling in the narration that carries the piece.

The Sacrifice of Sherlock Holmes really is a must-listen. Frequently surprising, occasionally emotional and never less than engrossing, Big Finish have delivered a spectacular Sherlock Holmes story unlike any other. This would definitely act as a strong end to the series, but we really hope there are more to come.

CHRISTIAN BONE

★★★★★★★★★ 9

OST

THE STARBURST
GUIDE TO THE LATEST
SOUNDTRACKS
BY NICK SPACEK



MondoCon in Austin, Texas, has left us wondering if it might just be a good idea to get a credit card especially for the event, then to spend the next year dodging creditors. It would probably be worth it just for things like the débuts of both **The Monster Squad** and **Deathgasm** releases, as well as a concert by **Turbo Kid** soundtrack duo Le Matos. Throw in pretty much every soundtrack label of note being present - including the first convention appearances of both Lakeshore and Milan Records - and you've got the makings for a very wonderful October weekend, especially given all of the likely releases and exclusives with which to deplete your bank account and the scads of like-minded fans with which to geek out... If you can scare up the cash, it all takes place October 22nd and 23rd.

Varèse Sarabande came out of nowhere and dropped Greg Edmonson's score to the cult sci-fi series **Firefly** as a double vinyl LP early last month. The Americana-tinged score Edmonson composed is just as memorable as the show itself, and lord knows how many Browncoats have the lyrics, "I don't care/I'm still free/You can't take the sky from me" tattooed somewhere on their body. It's available exclusively through Barnes & Noble bookstores, so you'll have to pay through the nose for this one, but given the love for the show, it's likely to be a hot item.

The soundtrack to part one of **Alice Isn't Dead** - the new podcast from the creators of **Welcome to Night Vale** - was released digitally from composer and musician Disparition. It's called **Fire Never Consuming**, and comprises 80 tracks from across the ten episodes of the show's first instalment. It's available now as a name-your-price download from disparition.bandcamp.com, and gets you everything from short snippets of noir-ish guitar to twelve-and-a-half minute droning epics.

iam8bit's releasing a staple of your childhood to vinyl: **Killer Cuts**, the 1995 compact disc that took the music from the cutting-edge combo fighting game **Killer Instinct** and turned it into a badass mix. It was only originally available as a pack-in with the Super Nintendo version of the game, but has kind of gained epic status among game fans over the last couple of decades. It's due out on vinyl next month, with either the classic Spinal cover on bone-coloured wax or a blue vinyl version

Oh my goodness, we're dead. In the last week of August came the official news that Milan would be releasing the first-ever official vinyl reissue of the classic anime, **Akira**. Better - it's not the soundtrack version, which has a bunch of dialogue from the film mixed in with the film, but the Symphonic Suite version, which is the complete Geinoh Yamashirogumi score. Even better - it's not a limited edition, meaning you don't have to freak out about trying to snag a copy before it hits the secondary market at a ridiculous mark-up.

Also in the last week of August was the latest release from Data Discs, who have taken their partnership with Sega to the next level. As excited as everyone was about **OutRun** (and it was pretty amazing, we have to say - see page 90), we're most excited about the now-available **Golden Axe** LP they've put out. Not only does it feature the music from the first game, but also **Golden Axe II**. Both have their music sourced

from the Sega archives, and the artwork from the 1989 Japanese release looks absolutely gorgeous. It can be snagged on 180-gram vinyl, either in black or translucent gold with purple swatches sold out pretty much immediately.

Icelandic composer Jóhann Jóhannsson - Golden Globe winner for his score to **The Theory of Everything** - was announced as the composer for next year's **Blade Runner** sequel, just as his latest album, **Orphée**, was released on Deutsche Grammophon. He's also teamed up for the third time with director Denis Villeneuve and did the music for the much-anticipated alien invasion drama **Arrival**, meaning he's likely got the science fiction arthouse vibe sewn up for the next twelve months. Given Jóhannsson's deft way with atmospherics for **Sicario** and what we got to briefly hear in **Arrival**'s trailer, we can't wait to hear what he has in store for **Blade Runner**'s follow-up.

The news of the third annual



featuring Sabrewulf on the cover. Both come with a download code.

In further 'reliving your childhood' news, if you snagged a copy of Mondo's **Castlevania** soundtrack 10-inch (see page 90), you might have noticed on the obi strip that the label will be releasing the rest of the series, as well. So, hopefully, we'll all be rocking **Simon's Quest**, **Dracula's Curse**, **Super Castlevania IV**, and **Symphony of the Night** sometime soon. Again: if you snagged the first release, you know how good it sounds, and hopefully, you're just as excited as we are for the rest.

Silva Screen has a vinyl release of the score to 1971's terror thriller, **The Nightcomers**, out now. The score, composed by Jerry Fielding, was previously released on compact disc by Intrada in 2008, but has never been released on LP. In keeping with the Michael Winner film's thematic elements, the score is both romantic and dark - a perfect Gothic suite. While likely under the radar of most casual fans, it's definitely worth seeking out.

Also coming to vinyl for the first time is a more well-known film. 1994's Luc Besson action thriller **Leon: The Professional** is being released by Waxwork Records. No further details are available on the Éric Serra score, but we'll just go ahead and assume that you'll want this gorgeous selection of music. It's so sweeping and grand that it works just as well as an album as it does a score.

La-La Land continue their amazing



onslaught of DC Comics animated scores with a two-disc CD release featuring composer Frederik Wiedmann's score for the **Justice League vs Teen Titans** and **Batman: Bad Blood** direct-to-video movies. They're just as big and epic as one would expect for superhero scores - especially the **Justice League vs Teen Titans** music, which makes abundant use of chorus and massive orchestral sweeps. **Bad Blood** does so as well, but in a more low-key fashion, keeping it appropriately downtempo for the Dark Knight. There's also a score for **The Killing Joke**'s animated version, but we're feeling a little squicky about the various changes they made to the storyline, and can't really get past the 'Bats and Babs getting it on' scene to focus on the music. The score's by Michael McCuiston, Kristopher Carter and Lolita Ritmanis, though, and what little we've heard straddles an awkward line between the music of the classic '90s animated series and Hans Zimmer's work on the Christopher Nolan films. It's not quite dark enough, but still too gritty to work for an animated film - even one for grown-ups.

Also for the grown-ups is La-La Land's Ltd edition single for the fiftieth anniversary of **Star Trek**. The die-cut 12-inch comes on gold vinyl in the shape of the Starfleet insignia. It's limited to 1701 copies and will run you nearly \$25 - which, considering you're getting just the first and third season themes of the original series (the former with the cello, the latter



with the iconic soprano voice) is a little ridiculous. It looks impressive, but there's not even two minutes of music.

If you're a long-time gamer, even a casual one, you'll remember the '90s CD-ROM bestsellers **MYST** and **Riven**. **MYST** co-creator and musical composer Robyn Moore just released a brand new score for the latest game from the company he co-founded, Cyan Worlds, entitled **Obduction**. Funded through Kickstarter, the game hit Steam right at the end of August, and the soundtrack is available on Bandcamp. It's massive and references everything from classic adventure films to late '70s horror and sci-fi. Definitely take a listen and see what it's like, because it's fascinating.

That **SNDTRK** compilation of film score-inspired music we spoke about a while back is out now from Disco Cinematic. It's a fantastic listen, and hasn't left our turntable since a test pressing showed up. We spoke with Vi-Res and Disco Cinematic's Michael Figucio about the compilation, and he described it thusly:

"Well, I am listening to the album right now and have listened to it so many times through the processes of curating, compiling, mastering, and reviewing masters and test pressings, et cetera," Figucio continued, "I really love it. It's an album that is good from the first play (it's not a grower) and it holds up extremely well to repeated listenings."

We agree. There's a three-song run of Vi-Res, Scott Johannsson, and Repeated Viewing that's worth the purchase price alone. The sequencing makes **SNDTRK** seem less a compilation and more a proper soundtrack, which was very much the intention, Figucio says:

"When I heard Technicolor Road by Wolfmen of Mars I thought, 'that's how you start a film and that's how you start an album'. Then I just thought, 'what should go next?' and kept up with the feeling of how the tracks flow together with each other."

SNDTRK is available now on Bandcamp and from a variety of online retailers. We can't suggest highly enough that you snag a copy as soon as possible. They're going quickly.

BRAVE NEW WORDS

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YOU THE LATEST
NEWS FROM
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N. K. Jemisin Wins Hugo Award

The 74th World Science Fiction Convention, MidAmeriCon II, announced the winners of the 2016 Hugo Awards. The winner for Best Novel is N. K. Jemisin for her work **The Fifth Season**. The book is about a single supercontinent called the Stillness. Every few centuries, its inhabitants endure what they call a 'fifth season' of catastrophic climate change.

Other winners included Nnedi Okorafor for her novella **Binti**, Hao Jingfang for his novelette called **Folding Beijing** and Naomi Kritzer for her short story **Cat Pictures Please**. The John W. Campbell Award for Best New Writer went to Andy Weir. Alas, due to interference, no one won Best Fancast, but the show **Tea & Jeopardy** received an Alfie Award, issued in person by George R. R. Martin. The Alfies are an award invented by Martin to be handed to those who didn't win a Hugo Award but would have under normal circumstances.

Sad Puppies Spanked at Hugo Awards

Pathetic, annoying, and bland protest group, the Sad Puppies, have yet again been humiliated at the Hugo Awards. Despite their best efforts, none of their nominees won a Hugo Award. In order to vote at the Hugo Awards you need to be a member of the annual WorldCon event. This global event tends to attract affluent, broadly read and widely travelled people. Until a couple of years ago, the annual nominees list reflected this. Staunchly conservative protestors, the Sad Puppies, exploited rules loopholes to fill the nominee list with low quality works that reflected their less worldly-wise values instead. This meant that the award for two categories, Best Related Work and Best Fancast, went to no one.

Nominees Announced for the First Dragon Awards

Dragon Con is a North American multigenre convention comparable in cultural impact to San Diego Comic-Con. This year, it announced that it would be running the Dragon Awards, which will be determined by public vote. The list of nominees has been announced, and it includes **Ancillary Mercy** by Ann Leckie for Best Science Fiction Novel, **The Fifth Season** by N. K. Jemisin for Best Fantasy Novel, and **The Shepherd's Crown** by Terry Pratchett for Best Young Adult. We predict no surprises when the awards are announced.

Ursula K. Le Guin entered into Library of America

Ursula Le Guin is quite rightly regarded as one of the most significant American writers of the modern age. She has recently been accorded the honour of being entered into the Library of America, a non-profit organisation that aims to keep classic works of American literature perpetually in print. What is unusual about this is that works are rarely entered into it whilst the author is still alive. Le Guin's book **The Complete Orsinia** will be produced as a special Library of America edition. The books (which have striking black covers) are designed to last a very long time. We at STARBURST are a little bit surprised they didn't choose **The Left Hand of Darkness**, however.

Frances Hardinge's CUCKOO SONG Optioned for Movie

We're big fans of Frances at STARBURST, and she is a long-time friend of our book podcast, now entitled **Brave New Words**. So we are delighted to hear that **Peter and Wendy** producers Catalyst Global Media have optioned the film and TV rights to her excellent Young Adult novel **Cuckoo Song**.

Set in a sleepy English town still recovering from the devastating events of World War One, it follows the unfortunate adventures of an eleven-year-old girl named Triss. The girl has a terrible and bizarre hunger, one that cannot easily be sated. To make matters even worse, pages are missing from her diary and her little sister Penelope seems to have taken an intense dislike to her. It's a great book and we can't wait to see the movie.

Adrian Tchaikovsky Wins Clarke Award

Regular readers of the **Brave New Words** column will be familiar with Adrian Tchaikovsky, as he's one of those talented authors we keep writing about. This time round, he's won the coveted Clarke Award. Now in it's 30th year, the Arthur C. Clarke Award is highly sought after and well regarded. The winner is judged by a jury panel and selected from an initial shortlist of six eligible novels.

The ceremony was yet again held in London, an unusual choice as none of the shortlisted authors are London-based.

GIRL WITH ALL THE GIFTS Follow-Up Announced

M. R. Carey will write a follow-up to his hit book, **The Girl with All the Gifts**. **The Boy on the Bridge** will be set in the same world and is set for a 2017 release. There is no word if this will also be turned into a film by Warner Bros starring Gemma Arterton. If it does get the Hollywood treatment, we do hope they treat it more kindly than they did Carey's comic book, **Lucifer**.

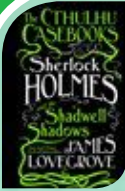
Pratchett's SMALL GODS to Get Folio Treatment

The Folio Society, who are responsible for producing beautiful versions of wonderful books, have announced that the next **Discworld** novel to get the full Folio Society treatment will be **Small Gods**.

The book is widely regarded as one of Terry Pratchett's most thoughtful and re-readable books in the series. It's a widely loved work, which sits pride of place on the shelf of many fans, so we can't wait to see the super-pretty version.

Catch STARBURST's own book podcast, Brave New Words, via our website starburstmagazine.com and on twitter @radiobookworm.

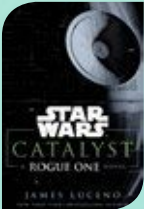
COMING SOON



THE CTHULHU CASEBOOKS - SHERLOCK HOLMES AND THE SHADWELL SHADOWS

AUTHOR: JAMES LOVEGROVE
PUBLISHER: TITAN BOOKS
RELEASE DATE: NOVEMBER 15TH

Good old Sherlock Holmes; he seems to be up against all sorts of horrors these days, thanks to writers of genre fiction. Lovegrove is known for his tightly paced adventure thrillers. His latest book, **Sherlock Holmes and the Shadwell Shadows**, takes us to London's East End, where an outbreak of insanity sees ordinary men and women reduced to sanity-blasted wrecks. Is it the fault of a mysterious fog creeping around old London Town, or is it something far, far worse? Will this be Holmes' greatest challenge yet?



STAR WARS: CATALYST: A ROGUE ONE STORY

AUTHOR: JAMES LUCENO
PUBLISHER: CENTURY
RELEASE DATE: NOVEMBER 17TH

Disney has been knocking it out of the park with their recent approach to the **Star Wars** tie-in novels. Now freed from decades of Expanded Universe cruft, the newly re-imagined worlds of **Star Wars** have been able to do new and interesting things. Catalyst is a prequel to **Rogue One** by James Luceno. He also wrote **Tarkin**, a book that explains the origin of the Grand Moff and went down well with pretty much all the fans. We have high hopes for this prequel novel.



PATHFINDER ADVENTURE PATH: CURSE OF THE CRIMSON THRONE

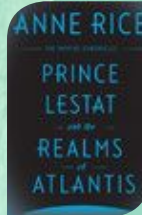
AUTHORS: G. A. VAUGHAN, F. W. SCHNEIDER, R. PETT
PUBLISHER: PAIZO PUBLISHING INC.
RELEASE DATE: NOVEMBER 3RD

Pathfinder is the only fantasy game to outsell **Dungeons and Dragons**, and its reign of awesome continues with **Curse of the Crimson Throne**. This new tome sees your heroes visit the city of Korvosa. Can your party calm a city in chaos and help bolster the queen? This immense book collects the six classic **Curse of the Crimson Throne** adventures, and has everything you need to run an entire, full-length campaign covering months and months of play!



DRACULA VS. HITLER
AUTHOR: PATRICK SHEANE DUNCAN
PUBLISHER: INKSHARES
RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER 25TH

Courage Under Fire screenwriter Patrick Sheane Duncan answers the question no-one ever thought to ask: if Hitler and Dracula went up against each other, who would win? The plot sees the Nazis invade Transylvania, which rather annoys Dracula and his legions of darkness. Meanwhile, Van Helsing (and his plucky daughter, Lucy) are fighting the good fight by taking on both Nazis and the Undead. Sounds more like a movie pitch than a novel to us, but we're looking forward to seeing it regardless.



PRINCE LESTAT AND THE REALMS OF ATLANTIS: THE VAMPIRE CHRONICLES

AUTHOR: ANNE RICE
PUBLISHER: KNOPF PUBLISHING GROUP
RELEASE DATE: NOVEMBER 29TH

Atlantis: the ancient and mysterious city of myth and legend. The Vampire Lestat: Anne Rice's immortal protagonist who seems pretty much indomitable and always able to rise to the challenge, regardless of how ridiculous that challenge may be. Rice is at her best when she mixes dreamlike fantasy with horror and a loss of identity. Rice has crafted the tale of a mysterious utopia filled with wonders, explored and expounded upon by her most marketable hero.



ABIGAIL LARSON'S THE CATS OF ULTHAR

AUTHOR: H. P. LOVECRAFT, ABIGAIL LARSON
PUBLISHER: ONE PEACE BOOKS
RELEASE DATE: NOVEMBER 15TH

Lovecraft loved cats. He wasn't so hot on people, but when it came to fuzzy felines, he was a big fan. In the story **The Cats of Ulthar**, he explains why no one in the land of Ulthar may kill a cat. A bizarre tale of orphans, kitten and curious events, this '20s story is considered to be one of Lovecraft's best. Celebrated artist Abigail Larson brings it back to life with her dark, Gothic style and love of kitties.



TALES FROM THE DARKSIDE: SCRIPTS BY JOE HILL

AUTHOR: JOE HILL
PUBLISHER: IDW PUBLISHING
RELEASE DATE: NOVEMBER 3RD

Joe Hill is shaping up to be one of the foremost voices in modern horror. His spectacularly haunting and engaging work is exciting fans of the strange across the fandom. In 2015, he also worked on a reboot of the TV show **Tales from the Darkside**. Alas, his scripts never made it to the screen. Well, fear fans can be happy that Hill's stories are now being released, accompanied by some outstanding illustrations provided by Charles Paul Wilson III. This is going to be a real crowd-pleaser.



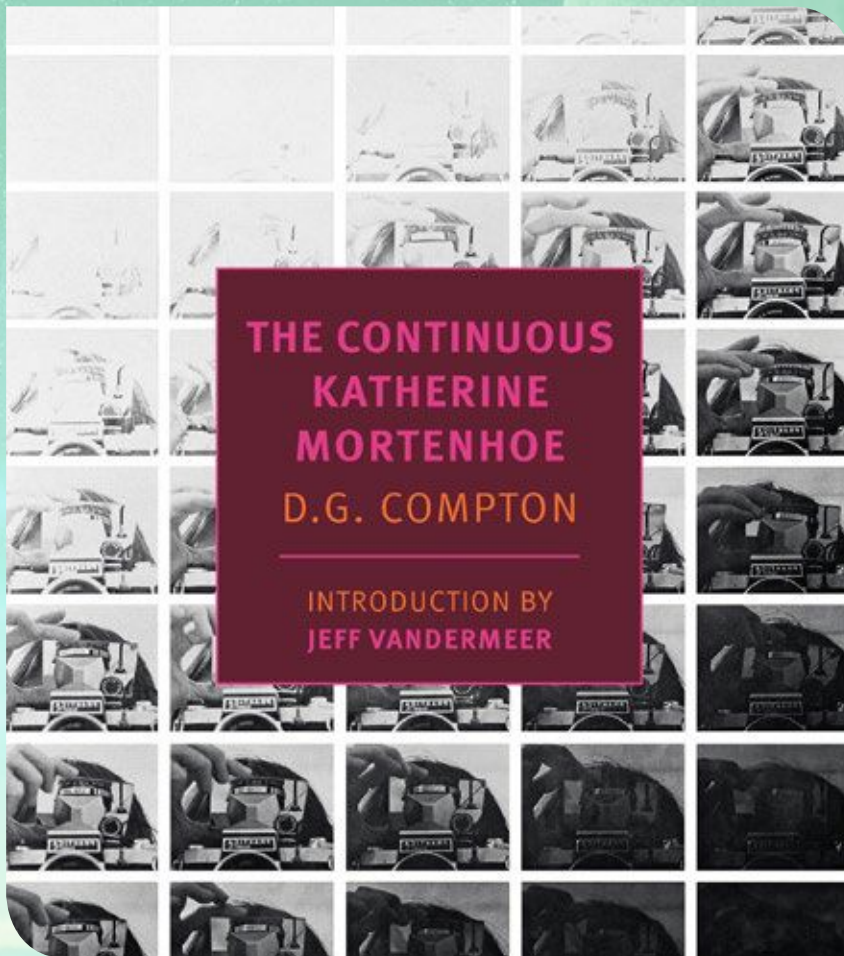
THE WALKING DEAD: SEARCH AND DESTROY

AUTHOR: JAY BONANSINGA
PUBLISHER: PAN
RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER 20TH

More bad guys have appeared in the survivor town of Woodbury. Barricades are burning and adults are getting murdered whilst children go missing. Lilly launches a desperate rescue mission to stop this from happening, and of course, it will lead her into a terrifying succession of traps and nightmare encounters with legions of walkers. These - as is often the case - are the least of Lilly's problems.

BOOK WORMHOLE

A MONTHLY PICK
OF GENRE FICTION
BY KATE FATHERS



to be something 'continuous'. However, I don't think Compton ever expects us to find that continuity. I don't think we're ever supposed to *know* Katherine, even though we see her internal struggle. Which is very true to life; we as people are always changing, moving and reinventing and recreating ourselves. We can't be known, like objects are known. We can't be defined. And that's part of what makes us so great.

Part of this exploration is the contrast between Katherine and the world she inhabits. Truth is at once suspect and a hot commodity in Compton's future world; something you prove with dozens of pieces of ID, and something you flog to TV stations, and never something you think of in relation to yourself. It makes it very hard to value people, and in this future, people don't value each other very much. A dying person's suffering only means something when it's written in ratings. Protestors are an inconvenience. People on the fringes of society are party favours for the rich. Compton was writing from 1974, but he could easily have been imagining where we could be going from 2016. Such a harsh future then makes Katherine's struggle to discover her own value - and through it, her own continuity - even more wonderful to read. It makes her brave and bold, even though demanding her right to privacy seems like such a simple thing. And when characters do connect with her, when that connection changes them into people who now value others for the human beings they are and not what they can provide, it's even more triumphant. It becomes a beautiful mark for Katherine to make on her world.

I wonder if Compton is ultimately trying to say that, although it's horrible, we human beings need illness. We die from more than old age and experience that suffering for a reason. Without it, we'd be like the people in his future London: lacking in compassion. If you know you'll live long, you might not live well. I'm not sure how I feel about that.

The Continuous Katherine Mortenhoe is a fantastic novel. It's smart, sad, beautifully written, and stuffed full of action and ideas. Whether you're a sci-fi fan or not, this wonderful book exploring humanity is definitely one everyone should read. Compton has written other sci-fi books, as well as crime novels (as Guy Compton) and Gothic fiction (as Frances Lynch). *The Continuous Katherine Mortenhoe* was also made into the film *Death Watch* in 1980.

In a perfect world, there is no illness. There is no cancer, or brain tumours, or autoimmune disease; no one dies from leukaemia at age ten or from heart disease at age seventy-five. You live until your body can't live anymore, and you have nothing but accidents to fear.

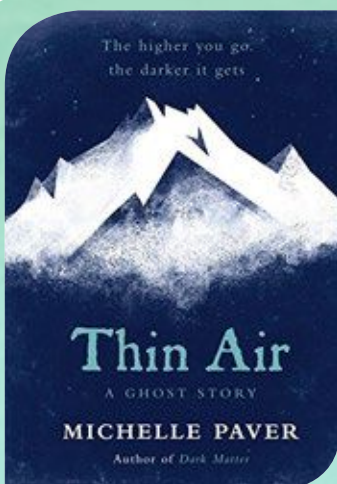
This is the world of Katherine Mortenhoe, who at forty-four is diagnosed with a terminal illness. A TV station quickly jumps at the chance to buy the rights to her last days, but Katherine refuses to be fodder for the 'pain-starved public'. If she's going to die, she's going to die her way. And she will cheat, beg, and steal to get what she wants.

The Continuous Katherine Mortenhoe is, in a lot of ways, a very unsettling book. Its subject matter isn't pretty, and the future D. G. Compton paints is sickeningly believable, and in a very real, horrifying move, many characters don't learn anything

from what goes on. But it's absorbing and nerve-wracking to read, and surprisingly, a novel about a woman with a terminal illness wasn't as hard to stomach as I feared. Compton strikes an excellent balance between action and emotion, and his use of multiple narrators helps with that. Changing perspectives keeps the story fresh, and makes sure readers are never in danger of being overwhelmed by Katherine's grief. It also allows him to explore his central themes and ideas more fully, particularly the theme of continuity. As the title suggests, the book's main focus is exploring all that is 'continuous and truthful and entirely [Katherine's]', from both her perspective and the perspectives of other people. You get to see Katherine from all angles and in all kinds of different ways; her character is established, broken down and then rebuilt, and somewhere in there is supposed to be a truth. There is supposed

THE LATEST RELEASES
REVIEWED AND RATED

REVIEWS



THIN AIR

AUTHOR: MICHELLE PAVER / PUBLISHER: ORION / RELEASE DATE: OCTOBER 6TH

It's the mid-1930s and an expedition is due to set out in hopes of reaching the summit of Kanchenjunga in the Himalayas. Dr Stephen Pearce is a medic and relatively

capable climber, drafted in as a last minute replacement to his brother's climbing party, and it is through Pearce that we experience the events that take place. As with many seemingly unconquerable mountains of that region, a number of ill-fated expeditions have taken on the challenge and failed, and one in particular, the Lyell assault of some 30 years earlier, hangs heavy over this new endeavour.

Early on, Pearce encounters ominous forewarnings via a survivor of the Lyell team, and struggles to temper his Western rationalism against the superstitions of the locals who will act as porters for the group. Running from a misjudged and now broken engagement back in England, not even these warnings, nor his fractious relationship with his wealthy, arrogant sibling and his own fears that he is not a good enough climber put Pearce off the mission ahead. Aware of the effects of altitude sickness and the dangers of climbing, Dr Pearce clings to this 'enlightened' reasoning even as unnerving and unsettling events begin to suggest that the native superstition is not unfounded, and something is waiting on the mountain to punish these men for their hubris.

Having actually been to Kanchenjunga herself, Paver vividly but economically

establishes the sights, sounds and atmosphere of the journey. Paver's research into mountaineering at that time, as well as the region and customs of the people, shines through in a strong and convincing tone. With Pearce as narrator, Paver uses his commentary to effectively and quickly build the other characters in the book and create a convincing history for the lack of love between the two brothers. Mixing in references to real climbers and expeditions of that time period helps to understand what drives the men to push on despite setbacks.

There are no obvious shocks here but instead a sustained, creeping dread as the likelihood increases that it's not all in Pearce's mind and that they are heading for tragedy just like Lyell and company. Subtitled 'A Ghost Story', this is very much the classic approach, concentrating on mood and subtlety to create chills in the reader. It could be argued the story itself is slight, but even if so, that matters little when told with such confidence and ability.

JAMES EVANS

★★★★★★★★★★ 8



THE PRESSED FAIRY JOURNAL OF MADELEINE COTTINGTON

AUTHORS: BRIAN AND WENDY FROUD / PUBLISHER: ABRAMS BOOKS / RELEASE DATE: SEPTEMBER 27TH

When Maddi Cottington and her parents emigrate from New York to London, strange things quickly begin happening. Maddi starts to see odd blurs and flashes on the periphery of her vision and she begins to worry that she might need glasses. But when she discovers a couple of old books about the Cottington family (which, for some reason, drives her father apoplectic), she begins to learn her

ancestors secret – the Cottingtons can see fairies, and it has driven many of them mad.

When she overhears her parents talking, and realises they plan to send her back to the US to live with her unpleasant aunt, Maddi decides to run away from home. And she knows exactly where she's headed – the Cottingtons' long-derelict mansion. Here she will discover the various cryptic messages that were passed between Angelica and Quentin Cottington, the brother and sister who lived in the mansion many decades before. She learns that Angelica was obsessed with pressing the fairies between the pages of her notebooks, whereas Quentin created all kinds of weird and wonderful inventions to collect the various tastes and smells the fairies left behind. And Maddi finds out she can also capture the fairies between the pages of her own journal, snapping the book shut and squashing them flat. Unbelievably, the fairies themselves seem to enjoy it (there's a reassuring note at the front of the journal stating that no fairies have been maimed or injured during the making of this book).

But as the days pass, Maddi realises she was always meant to be here, and that the fairies have a plan. She's sure that it's got something to do with the strange beehive-shaped hut that is somewhere in

the woods that surround the estate, and she's determined to uncover the secret. The only danger is, when she passes through the hut, will she ever return? And if she does return, will the experience have driven her insane, which is exactly what seems to have happened to poor Quentin.

Dressed in her suit of armour, with only her beehive tattoo for protection, Maddi steps into the unknown.

This is the latest in the bestselling series of Lady Cottington's Pressed Fairy books and it is an absolute delight. Not surprisingly – since it was written and illustrated by the iconic and utterly brilliant Brian and Wendy Froud – it is also quite beautiful to look at, with squashed fairies on every page (some gorgeous and sylph-like and some downright loony-looking), photographs from Maddi's selfie collection, and various pictures and drawings courtesy of Angelica and Quentin. And don't forget to check out the envelope on the inside-back cover.

The Pressed Fairy Journal of Madeleine Cottington is a spellbinding treat for children of all ages that proves, sometimes, reading truly can be magical.

IAN WHITE

★★★★★★★★★★ 10



INVASION

AUTHOR: LUKE RHINEHART
PUBLISHER: TITAN BOOKS
RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Invasion author Luke Rhinehart gave the world a true cult classic with his 1971 novel *The Dice Man*. Banned in multiple

countries, it was a forward-thinking, ground-breaking novel that's since been acknowledged for its importance and was even named "one of the fifty most influential books of the last half of the twentieth century" by the BBC. With *Invasion*, Rhinehart has returned with another potential cult classic in the making, a story imbued with biting social commentary, intelligence, originality and a constant supply of entertainment on every page.

The story centres around an invasion of the extraterrestrial kind. When a race of smart, playful and unexplainable shapeshifting aliens arrives on Earth, they seem quite adorable at first. Billy Morton and his family even adopt one called Louie, and they take a liking to

his jolly nature. However, when Louie and his kin start hacking into government, corporate and banking networks in order to share the wealth, they incur the wrath of the powers that be. Now Billy and his family are on the FBI's "Most Wanted List" and the creatures from space are deemed terrorists. Needless to say, chaos ensues.

To go into the details of *Invasion* would spoil its charms. Fans of Rhinehart's work already will be pleased to know he's back and operating on top form, whereas newcomers will be pleased to have come across a book many of them will find enthralling. However, it doesn't shy away from veiling its political statements either, which might deter potential readers who

don't share Rhinehart's ideology, especially in regards to American foreign policy and his general perception of humanity. Though best read through a satirical lens, Rhinehart's observations are at times, frighteningly on point.

That being said, fans of science fiction oddities are destined to have a good time with *Invasion*. Should you choose to decipher its deeper meanings, you'll find it an intellectually stimulating and wholly thought-provoking read. *Invasion* is a novel that fires on all cylinders and you owe it to yourself to pick it up.

KIERAN FISHER

★★★★★★★★★ 9



USS ENTERPRISE OWNERS' WORKSHOP MANUAL

AUTHOR: B.ROBINSON, M.RILEY
PUBLISHER: J. H. HAYNES & CO LTD
RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Anyone who's ever owned a car would be familiar with the trusty Haynes manual. It's your go-to tome when things go wrong. Whether it's changing a fuse, adjusting the lights, or stripping down the engine, the company

has kept people on the straight and narrow and helped them avoid costly garage bills for something that one can do on the drive with some affordable tools. Until you screw up, of course, then it's back to the professionals with a sheepish look on your face.

Now the company (which started publishing these guides back in 1956) have given us what we want, and more importantly, what we need - a handy guide to servicing and maintaining our Enterprise. Well, to be fair, this edition covers all the Starfleet ships from 2151 onwards, so whether your NX-01 is in need of a warp speed overhaul or your shields are constantly down on your NCC-1701 because you've taken one too many photon hits, then you can save valuable credits and do it yourself.

Well, we jest, of course. This book is far from the dry and

boring technical babble that drivers have to wade through. Instead, we get a fascinating history of each ship, illustrated with images from the various Star Trek shows and some brilliantly detailed diagrams.

There is even an easy-to-follow flow chart image helping the confused to understand parallel universes, and sections on warp propulsion and how transporter systems work. Little Timmy might not necessarily be able to build one in the garden shed, but at least he'll have a grasp of it when it comes to re-watching the films and the TV episodes.

Where the *Enterprise Owners' Workshop Manual* shines is in how it brings together a wealth of information that has been built up over fifty years of Star Trek's history. All the references to each ship, shuttle and flight deck

will begin to make more sense to those who haven't already studied the subject in depth. And those who have might even learn a few new tidbits of information that'll help them decipher all that babble that Scotty comes out with when he's making excuses for why the Enterprise is letting the crew down and putting them in jeopardy. It's very easy to dip into, and certainly a worthwhile read for new fans who would like to get up to (warp) speed with Starfleet tech before the upcoming series.

An essential purchase for Trek fans, although we have no doubt there are some who would have loved it to be a spec-heavy collection of mechanical data and a 'how to' guide to fixing the ships.

MARTIN UNSWORTH

★★★★★★★★★ 8



SUMMERLONG

AUTHOR: PETER S. BEAGLE
PUBLISHER: TACHYON PUBLICATIONS
RELEASE DATE: SEPTEMBER 29TH

When Abe and his long-time partner Joanna befriend the mysterious, hypnotically

beautiful young woman they find waitressing at their local diner, they cannot be prepared for what happens next. No sooner has Lioness Lazos taken up residence in Abe's garage than the Puget Sound island on which they live begins to enjoy unseasonably glorious weather. And Lioness's arrival doesn't just affect the seasons - Abe, a resolutely private man who plays his harmonica just to annoy the neighbours, suddenly finds himself drawn into a Blues Band and enjoying a lease on life he never thought possible, whereas Joanna - who has always had a deep fear of the water - inexplicably discovers a passion for kayaking. And Joanna's grown-up daughter, Lily, has also fallen under Lioness's spell, harder

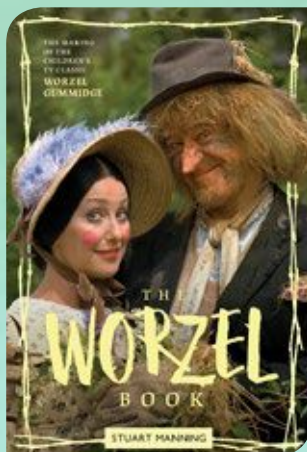
and more dangerously than Abe or her mother. But when Lioness's terrible secret is revealed, life will never be the same again, not for any of them.

Peter S. Beagle's latest novel is a bewitching, impossible-to-categorise masterpiece. Is it a romance, a fairytale, or a fantasy that straddles reality and mythology, with (especially in the scenes involving Joanna and a strangely out-of-time old man called Mr. Mardikian) the slightest hint of wonderful supernatural romcoms like *'Bell Book and Candle'* and *'I Married a Witch'*? Or is it suggesting that we are never too old to chase our dreams, even if our dreams come at a price, so maybe we should be careful what we wish for? It is probably all of these and more, and even if

you find yourself half-guessing Lioness's secret long before it is actually revealed, the climax will still take you by surprise and may even break your heart a little. With prose that is more akin to poetry, Beagle's storytelling casts a spell as potent as Lioness's magic - if magic is what it is - and his characters, especially Abe and Joanna, are exquisite creations. It's so good to read a story wherein older people are allowed to be the 'heroes' of the adventure, and not relegated to the supporting cast. As a fantasy, this might not have enough darkness for many readers, but as a work of fantastical art it is flawless.

IAN WHITE

★★★★★★★★★ 10



THE WORZEL BOOK

AUTHOR: STUART MANNING
PUBLISHER: MIWK
RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Despite attracting UK audiences of around twelve million, rave press notices and boasting guest turns from the cream of the country's most-respected contemporary character actors - Joan Sims, Bernard Cribbins, Barbara Windsor - Worzel Gummidge is a show which has very much slipped through the cracks of cult TV appreciation. Former Doctor Who Jon Pertwee brought the living scarecrow and his interchangeable heads, as created by writer Barbara Euphan Todd, vividly to life in four gorgeously realised and atmospheric TV series screened in Britain between 1979 and 1981, a spectacular stage production and two further series filmed in the 1980s in New Zealand. Yet Worzel is never repeated on television and DVD collections of his escapades are now hard to find. Notwithstanding the fact that 21st century kids are now more interested in grim dystopian adventures than Worzel's

quaint brand of farmyard frolics, it's hard to understand why the show has become quite so unloved and ignored. Stuart Manning's lavish, expansive, beautifully illustrated and designed tome exploring the phenomenon of Worzel Gummidge - and yes, girls and boys, it really was a phenomenon - serves to at least partially redress the balance and, if nothing else, to finally chronicle the history of one of popular fiction's strangest creations and his sometimes troubled exploits on both radio and television.

Todd created Worzel and his chums at Scatterbrook Farm in the early 1930s and her manuscripts only found an interested publisher following a successful run on the BBC's Children's Hour radio strand in 1935. Worzel was finally up and shuffling and he drifted in and out of fashion (often at the whim of producers and programme controllers) until 1952, when he made his first appearance on TV in a four-part BBC television serial starring Frank Atkinson.

But the story of Worzel's explosion of popularity - and the meat of Manning's fine, effortlessly readable text - really begins in the late 1970s, when writers Keith Waterhouse and Willis Hall eventually brought Todd's character to the screen with former Doctor Who Jon Pertwee joyfully seizing the opportunity to create another career-defining role. His passion for the character pretty much defined him for the rest of his professional life and his performances as the naïve, bumbling, well-meaning Worzel were the lynchpin of the series. But once again the industry initially seemed immune to Worzel's unique charms; with some misgivings, Southern TV bankrolled an intended thirteen-part TV series that entered production towards the end of 1978.

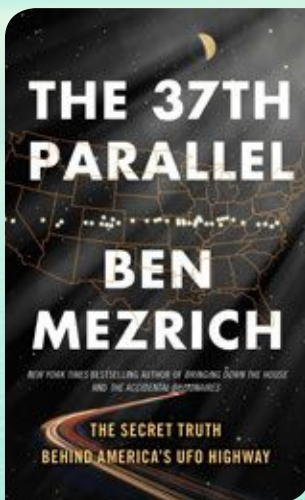
Worzel Gummidge was an enormous, popular hit. But throughout its run it was devilled by bad luck and misfortune. Every year, the planned run of episodes was reduced for reasons usually entirely beyond the control of the production, with the infamous ITV strike in 1979 shutting

down filming for months. Yet despite the exigencies of its making, Worzel was an instant success and the character - alongside bizarre supporting characters that included the mean-spirited Aunt Sally (Una Stubbs), the wily Crowman (Geoffrey Bayldon) and the busty Saucy Nancy (Barbara Windsor) - quickly became part of Britain's cultural currency. Southern TV lost its franchise to TVS after the fourth series and Worzel promptly disappeared. But by now he had become so established that his return was in many ways inevitable. A planned relaunch in Ireland collapsed but Worzel and Aunt Sally finally made their way to New Zealand for two new series (21 episodes) which aired in the UK in 1987 and 1989 on a clearly disinterested Channel 4 who had co-financed the series but chose to air it in a graveyard Sunday morning slot. But the magic wasn't quite the same (despite some scripts for later episodes written by Fran 'Lord of the Rings' Walsh) and Worzel slipped quietly off our screens again and drifted away into our collective TV memory bank.

Whether you're an ageing fan of Worzel in any of his incarnations or if, like this reviewer, you found the whole concept of the character a little creepy and macabre, The Worzel Book will tell you everything you could ever have wanted to know about the history of Worzel Gummidge. Manning's research is absolutely meticulous; he's spoken to virtually everyone still alive who worked on the radio and TV series and sitting alongside in-depth analyses of every episode are details of unearthed unfiled scripts, the true story behind the aborted reboot set in Ireland (the plug was pulled just a handful of days before filming was due to start) and pretty much all points in between. A terrific book in its own right, this is one to sit back and enjoy whilst wearing your reading 'ead and with a cup o'tea and a slice o'cake at your side.

PAUL MOUNT

★★★★★★★★★★10



THE 37TH PARALLEL

AUTHOR: BEN MEZRICH
PUBLISHER: ATRIA BOOKS
RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

A former sheriff's deputy, Chuck Zukowski, stars in this based-on-fact story of how he became obsessed with investigating flying saucer reports, visiting cattle mutilation sites and gathering evidence that there is a huge government conspiracy to suppress the truth.

Through making weekend trips with his family to UFO hotspots, interviewing witnesses and conducting research, he came to the conclusion that all these incidents are on, or close to, the 37th degree 3,000 mile-long latitude line, which he has nicknamed the Paranormal or UFO Freeway.

This is a tourist guide to US ufology that ticks all the boxes: Roswell, Area 51, military UFO encounters, shadowy government agencies, sacred Native American Indian sites, underground and underwater

alien bases and giant humanoid-like creatures are all lumped together with astronomical connections and magnetic anomalies that hangout on Bukowski's UFO Freeway.

It's an entertaining story, especially if you don't know much about ufology or have never seen a UFO film; otherwise it doesn't bring much new to the table. Other ufologists have come up with UFO and ley line connections, or produced grids and networks showing UFO patterns that 'exist' throughout the world. I'm sure you could find any 3,000 mile lines or circles or triangles that you could fill with amazing UFO and anomalistic connections. Putting coloured pins on a map isn't scientific research or evidence of any inter-connectedness between all of this phenomena.

Zukowski is depicted as something of a maverick who operates beyond the confines of organised UFO groups, but there are many other UFO investigators who would make a better story. This has already been done in the case of John Keel, who was portrayed by Richard Gere in The Mothman Prophecies, which at least stirs up some sinister doings in a small West Virginia town.

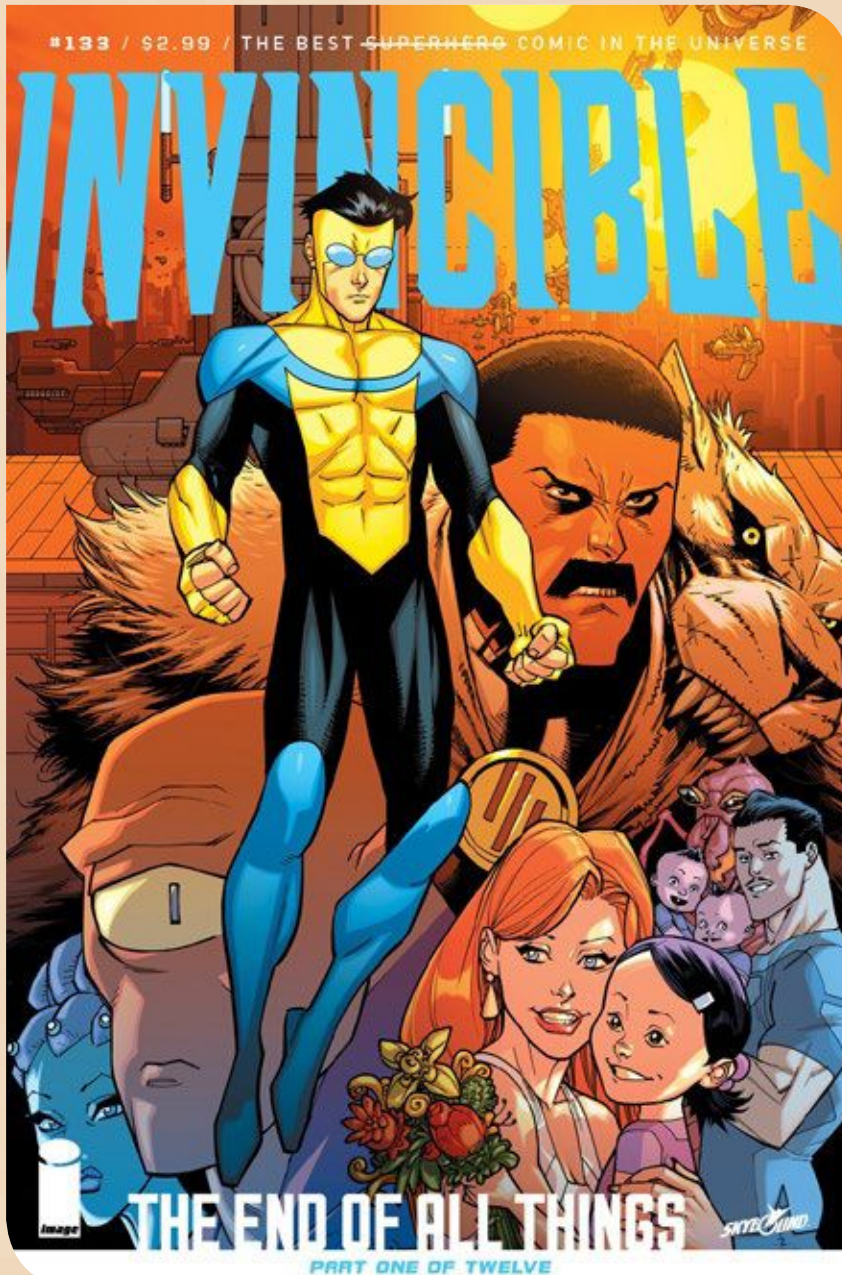
There is a distinct possibility that The 37th Parallel will be made into a film, but I fear it will not have enough power or originality to get out of the shadow of the comedy movie Paul, which featured Simon Pegg and Nick Frost making a tour of US UFO hotspots in their RV.

NIGEL WATSON

★★★★★★★★★★7

VIEW FROM THE WATCHTOWER

GARETH EVANS PULLS
MONITOR DUTY
TO BRING YOU THE
LATEST FROM
THE WORLD OF
COMIC BOOKS



after thirteen years of publication *Invincible* will be concluding with issue #144 next year. The end of a comic is always a bittersweet time for fans. With DC and Marvel keeping their characters alive for decades, this isn't something that superhero fans experience that often. Sure, comic book series end all the time (just look at how many titles from the New 52 were cancelled long before Rebirth). This is slightly different, however, in that the story of *Invincible*'s character is coming to a definitive end rather than having his issues cancelled due to bad sales.

Over at DC, Batman has been having a bad month, even for Batman. In the pages of *Batman* (written by Tom King) new heroes have shown up to help, and in a stunning break from tradition, Batman actually opted to trust them. Unfortunately for him, the one time that Batman was willing to let someone else aid within his city, it has ended really, really badly. It's a long story, but the short version is that Hugo Strange, Psycho-Pirate and superheroes do not mix, and Batman is not finding that out the fun way.

If it is any consolation to Batman, Superman has not been having the best month himself. Doomsday has reared his head again. Granted it was nowhere near as destructive as the first time the two fought but seeing as Superman has a wife and son now this can't have been a fight he was eager to take part in. It has often been commented that writers haven't really known what to do with Doomsday since his initial appearance and the answer Action Comics writer Dan Jurgens has come up with is to have Doomsday tease a greater mystery. Without giving too much away, they haven't defeated Doomsday so much as helped a mysterious villain with the next step of his plan. This latest story adds to the growing mystery that has come out of the comics since the recent Rebirth.

Of course, it isn't all bad news in the world of DC. This month *The Sandman: Overture* won the Hugo award for Best Graphic Story. We hear so many negative stories about what comic book characters face that it's always nice when the story is those creators being recognised and rewarded for their efforts. Here at STARBURST, we would like to take a chance to congratulate not only Neil Gaiman and J. H. Williams, but everyone who won a Hugo award last month.

And speaking of recognition,

As our regular readers will know, Joel Harley stepped down from the **Watchtower** last month. As tempting as it may be, this is not a time to flee in terror as you realise that the responsibility for maintaining the **Watchtower** has fallen to me. In the words of Tony Stark, "I will be fair, but

firmly cruel". Now before delusions of grandeur convince STARBURST to rethink this move, we should probably get on track with reporting the comic book news of the month.

In our first story, Image Comics are facing an ending of their own. This month, Robert Kirkman announced that



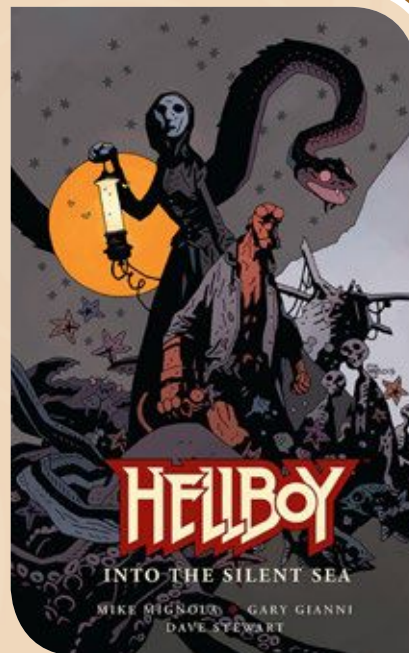
Marvel spent the last week of August celebrating 'Jack Kirby week', paying tribute to the legacy of famed artist Jack Kirby. This is in honour of what would have been his 99th birthday. As our readers will know, the extent to which Kirby has been recognised, and *should* be recognised, has been the subject of a huge amount of controversy and even legal action over the decades. Hopefully, stories like this will be considered the norm one day, rather than the exception. These creators inspire us with their work, it feels like recognising them for that is the least we can do.

Marvel have announced STEAM covers, a set of comic book covers designed to promote the importance of education. STEAM stands for Science, Technology, Engineering, Art, and Maths (actually, it stands for the American version of the word but this is a British



magazine, dammit!). According to Marvel's website, the campaign 'plans to ignite the spark of creativity and innovation that fuels the very heroes that have helped inspire generations around the world'. The STEAM covers will be available for comics on sale in November this year. As mentioned, comics are great fuel for the imagination and it is commendable to see Marvel using that power in service of education, especially considering how often its characters have distracted us all from our homework over the years.

And in our final bit of news this month, it has been announced by Dark Horse that they will be publishing a new Hellboy graphic novel next year and it will be an original work, not a trade paperback. *Hellboy: Into the Silent Sea* will be written by the character's creator Mike Mignola, co-written and drawn by Gary Gianni,



and coloured by Dave Stewart. The story will depict Hellboy being stranded on a desert island and crossing paths with a ghost ship. For those of our readers who are worried that this will undo Hellboy's recent ending, don't worry; this story is set after an older Hellboy tale, much like how *Hound of the Baskervilles* was set before the famous death of Sherlock Holmes despite being written after. This news will be welcome to those who weren't ready to see Hellboy stories end yet.

And with that, my first **View from the Watchtower** has come to an end. I looking forward to delving into the exciting, and bizarre world that is the comic book industry with you all over the coming months. ✦

Gareth Evans can be contacted at: gareth.evans@starburstmagazine.com and on Twitter: @OneTrueGareth



REVIEWS

THE LATEST COMIC
BOOK RELEASES
REVIEWED AND RATED



VESSELS #1

WRITER: DAVE COOK / ARTIST: RAFAEL
DESQUITADO JR, DENNIS LEHMANN /
PUBLISHER: CARD SHARK COMICS / RELEASE
DATE: OUT NOW

A young woman named Wake wanders the countryside in a nomadic self-imposed exile, relentlessly hounded by a destructive sky-bound entity known only as the Eye that annihilates any town she stays in for too long. After being captured by slavers and taken to the city of Stratum, she is soon forced to take on a less passive role in her own life and use her link to the Eye so it can be stopped.

After a suitably vague prologue, Vessels pulls you in further with the mystery of Wake. Her origin unknown and a broken chain

fastened to her ankle the only clue to her past, she exists as a blank slate with the potential to be the saviour or the ruination of the realm, depending on how events play out. Joining her are Mind Keeper G'Dala and snarky thief Marillon, who with a tongue as sharp as her blades will likely become a favourite among readers, while the anachronistic vernacular of her speech makes for a jarring but amusing contrast to the flowing prose of Wake's internal monologuing or G'Dala's expository pronouncements.

At a base level, Vessels could seem like just another trip into a generic fantasy world. Quasi-medieval mythic realm; fighter/mage/thief power trio of protagonists; dark and otherworldly forces gathering for nebulous reasons - it all appears fairly standard at first glance. But as the story progresses, it becomes clear it's something else entirely.

It's stated from the outset that the series revolves around the theme of dreams, but it's so much more than a trippy warping of the abstract everyday that such a concept is often portrayed as. We are taken deep into a world of such untapped potential, surreal power and mutable reality, that when the titular quintet of hunters are introduced in the final pages and revealed as the kind of chimeric monstrosities you might encounter in a Clive Barker novel, they don't seem the least bit out of place.

Given the advance notice of the comic's themes, you'll quickly develop a fair few ideas

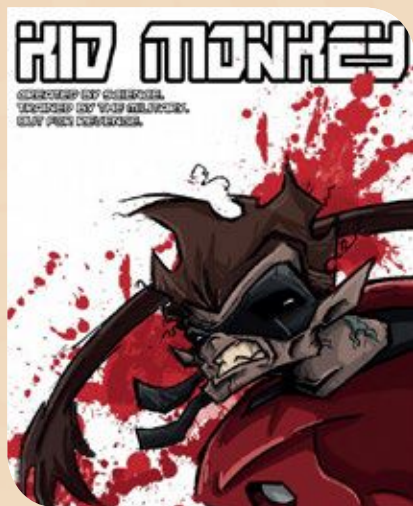
of where the plot might be heading, with one possibility being so clear it's all but explicitly stated by the issue's end. However, in doing so it becomes replaced by the far more interesting question of what this actually means for the story. As well as an apparent intent to dissect the true nature of reality, the story also contains various philosophical undertones referring to psychological constructs and the collective unconscious, which craftily allows for the inclusion of basic genre archetypes while simultaneously absolving the comic of their use.

Though only a Kickstarter stretch goal allowed the comic to be full colour, it was clearly always envisioned to be so. A heady chromatic blaze saturates every panel, each a meticulous composition of glowing light, creeping shadow and dazzling hues, all against a sky of smouldering flame giving way to the rich purple of deep night. The palette's lush vitality infuses a hyper-reality into the dreamscape, forging a land authentic in composition and fantastical in realisation.

Vessels is a captivating start to an intriguing mystery that's all but guaranteed to get far stranger before any answers are given, and with an opening this compelling that's quite an exciting thought.

ANDREW MARSHALL

★★★★★★★★★ 9



KID MONKEY #1: PROJECT GENESIS

WRITER: JAMES MCCULLOCH / ARTIST: PAUL
JOHNSON, LAUREN KNIGHT / PUBLISHER:
COMICHAUS / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

After infusing the indie comics scene with the dark horror of anthology The Grime and magnificent ongoing saga City of Lost Souls, one-man comics machine James McCulloch has turned his hand to action with the first of a new series.

Abel (Abe) is a monkey warrior created by a secret government project that sees bioengineers creating perfect soldiers. But in the best tradition of black-ops science, something is about to go terribly wrong, and few will be left standing when the dust settles.

The story is a simple one, but has you hooked from its opening moment of an in medias res fight between Abe and his brother (who it's unlikely to be much of a stretch to guess is named Cain), before jumping back to the build up toward it, as well as the personal history between the two. For a character who never speaks, Abe is surprisingly expressive, with little more than the shape of his eyes and mouth required to show what he's feeling, at least when he's not unleashing his bestial fury upon the latest fool with the temerity to anger him.

As an action comic, the most important aspect is the fight scenes, and they do not

disappoint. Appearing at measured intervals, they are fast-moving bursts of brutal violence accompanied by a suitable number of explosions and striking of dramatic poses. The panel layout and angles of the images make them feel like an assortment of stills from an action film, allowing your mind to fill in the energetic music and dynamic sound effects.

The art by Paul Johnson is instantly recognisable as coming from the guy responsible for Razor Bastard, with the characters' bodies made of an arrangement of hexagonal composites distorted into the required shapes, while the overt stylisation is tempered by the colours of Lauren Knight, the muted shading and shadowed gore echoing her visceral work inking Saltire: Annihilation.

The beginning of a personal journey, an intriguing mystery and a buttload of asskicking, Project Genesis is a quick introduction to the world of Kid Monkey, but as soon as it's over it immediately leaves you wanting more.

ANDREW MARSHALL

★★★★★★★★★ 8



COMICHAUS #1

WRITER AND ARTIST: VARIOUS / PUBLISHER: COMICHAUS / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Comichaus is an online comic book marketplace, and is also a store for indie creatives to sell their work. This inaugural issue of this monthly anthology pulls together new works from several of them, featuring the initial instalments of several new ongoing stories.

Things begin strong with Karyn Shade, featuring its eponymous protagonist becoming stranded somewhere in the untamed wilds of eastern Scotland. Like a hybrid of Lisbeth Salander and Buffy

Summers in a really bad mood, Karyn is a barely contained storm of irate fury. While it's possible she's a carefree and agreeable young woman outwith the context of being marooned in the arse end of nowhere, it seems unlikely. The story is clearly soon to head down the Gothic horror route, but with a foul-tempered, genre-savvy and eternally snarky heroine at the fore who strides towards 'a really big creepy looking house' in full acknowledgment of how ill-advised an idea that is, we're sure to be in for a few surprises.

In Feather, a new strain of avian flu has begun ravaging the planet, which if the apparent flash forward of the first page is anything to go by, will not end well. Meanwhile, we follow Doug, a police officer in a small town in rural America going about his evening in an easygoing way as the epidemic slowly finds its way to the isolated settlement. Heavy on dialogue, it allows us to get to know the few characters introduced and get a feel for the slow pace of the lives they lead. Vague clues are dropped about the direction in which it's heading, but it offers nothing definitive yet.

Suited and Booted is a sci-fi tale relating humanity's colonisation of Mars and its subsequent fall and enslavement by ruthless and pitiless alien invaders christened the Breakers. The reminiscence takes us past the domed settlements and heavy industry of Mars' initial terraforming, then the twinkling lights of futuristic urban utopia, before finally the cuboid pits of a strip-mined hellscape. It's entirely backstory and only reveals its protagonist in the final panel, but sets things up nicely for a saga of bloodthirsty vengeance.

With an intriguing hybrid setting of Western mixed with fantasy, The Troubleshooters follows a pair of

gunslingers crossing a stretch of desert badlands on their dragon mounts. Who they are, where they came from, what they want and even their names are all still unknown, but it's precisely that mystery that ensures you want more of the story. The monochrome watercolour of the artwork reflects the setting, as though the pages, seemingly stained with the arid dust of the lawless frontier, are as old as the tale itself.

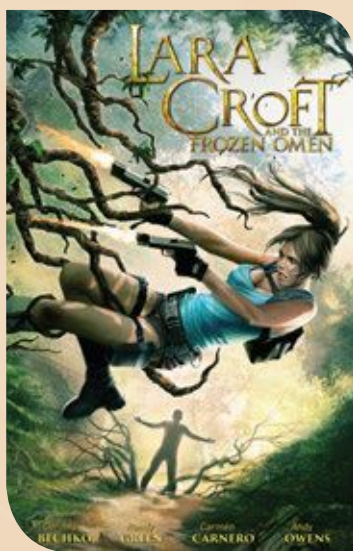
In Mortality, a simple pick up for one of the Grim Reaper's assistants becomes complicated by his charge Morton refusing to accept the situation as presented to him. It soon becomes clear something unusual is going on, but exactly what remains to be seen. The jet-black backgrounds create a suitably sinister atmosphere, contrasting nicely with the ethereal glow of otherworldly conjurations and the bright light of flames you can practically hear crackling.

The issue ends with the sole one-shot, Mum & Dad, is a nightmarish horror told from the perspective of a small child. Playing on kids' suspicions that their parents aren't entirely truthful to them, it pulls you along with the shock of little Jimmy's discovery, ending on a revelation that manages to be both poignant and tragic, while at the same time also grimly humorous.

Something akin to an indie 2000 AD, Comichaus has the breadth of writing and artistic talent at its disposal to go the distance of its renowned forbear. While each of the tales are still properly finding themselves, the engaging openings promise greater things to come.

ANDREW MARSHALL

★★★★★★★★★ 8



LARA CROFT AND THE FROZEN OMEN

WRITER: CORINNA BECHKO / ARTISTS: RANDY GREEN, CARMEN CARNERO / PUBLISHER: DARK HORSE / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

It has been three years since the Lara Croft reboot in the comics, which has allowed an interpretation of a young and overconfident Lara as she finds herself on many adventures. However, many long-term fans of Lara Croft, have been hoping for a welcome return to the experienced and high-spirited Lara that they are used to. Luckily, this void may be filled with the arrival of Lara Croft and the Frozen Omen.

Corinna Bechko has given her talent to create a comic mini series centred on an epic Lara Croft tale. This is set in the same universe as the videogames, Lara Croft and the Guardian of Light and Lara Croft and the Temple of Osiris. However, it can be understood and read as a fun-filled standalone read. As with all Lara Croft stories, it tells of an impending disaster of a worldwide scale. When ancient ivory artefacts are linked to some peculiar situations in the world, Lara Croft steps in to investigate and to save the world from the potential devastation.

In terms of the storyline, it is a classic Lara Croft tale, a fun and fast-paced adventure. It does contain many clichés and doesn't have any surprises throughout the story, but rather reads

like a nostalgia filled comic that ticks off all the boxes for a classic adventure tale. Although it can be a predictable read, it is great to see a fun and humorous return for Lara Croft. It's a fun and quick read that will leave you searching for more Lara Croft comics.

ANDREW MUSK

★★★★★★★★★ 8



WHAT IS IT TO BE HAPPY ?

I HAVE ASK THIS MANY TIMES

**TO END ALL WAR THE SUPER POWERS
OF THIS WORLD MADE IN THE HAPPY BOMB**

**ON APRIL 1
6 YEARS AGO WITHOUT WARNING
IN THE FOUR CORNERS OF THE WORLD
THEY GAVE US HAPPY. NO WAR. NO GREED
JUST A HAPPY HUMAN RACE ...**

APRIL

**FEAR AND TERROR WAS TAKEN
FROM US
AND THE PEOPLE OF THE WORLD
WERE MADE HAPPY BUT THEY DID NOT COUNT
ON THE RESULT
7 BILLION HAPPY FACES
HOW WRONG THEY WERE....**

**A POWERFUL MUTATION TOOK
PLACE !**

**HOW I LIVE UNCHANGED
GOD ONLY KNOWS
BUT EACH DAY IT GETS HARDER.**

**MY FAMILY ARE GONE
MY AMMO IS LOW
HOW DO I GO ON ?
SHOULD I BE HAPPY ?**

**EACH DAY IT CREEPS
I HERE THEM
OUT SIDE CRAWLING
AT THE WINDOWS**

**HOW CAN I SLEEP
WHEN I FEEL THE WHITE CLAWS
REACH OUT TO PUT THAT FINAL
SMILE ON MY FACE**

**WE ALL WHAT TO
BE HAPPY**

ANIME-NATION

A MONTHLY
ROUND UP FROM
THE WORLD OF ANIME
AND MANGA FROM
LITTLEANIMEBLOG.COM'S
DOMINIC CUTHBERT



MADOKA MAGICA's Gen Urobuchi Pens GODZILLA Anime Movie

An anime movie starring everyone's favourite dinosaur has been green-lit, simply titled **Godzilla**, with a script being written by **Puella Magi Madoka Magica's** Gen Urobuchi. Toho Entertainment registered the godzilla-anime.com domain back in August, with Urobuchi himself taking to Twitter to announce he'd been preparing in secret for sixteen months. The film will open next year, and Kobun Shizuno, director of several **Detective Conan** and **Fist of the North Star** movies, is directing alongside Hiroyuki Seshita of **Knights of Sidonia** at Polygon Pictures.

Viz and Rooster Teeth Team Up to Publish RWBY Manga

Viz Media has formed a publishing partnership with Rooster Teeth - the Austin, Texas-based creators of **RWBY** - to develop new book titles based on the internationally beloved series. Starting with the publication of a **RWBY** manga in 2017, more print releases are promised to follow, expanding the world of Remnant. Despite its shortcomings, **RWBY** is definitely a series worth getting excited about and the manga only sweetens the deal.

KILL LA KILL Animator Guests on STEVEN UNIVERSE

Studio 4°C recently lent its talent to a guest slot on **The Amazing World of Gumball**, kicking off a spate of anime alumni contributing to Cartoon Network shows. This time Takafumi Hori, studio Trigger veteran of **Kill la Kill** and **Little Witch Academia**, was given the opportunity to work on the Emmy-nominated **Steven Universe**. The episode, **Mindful Education**, aired at the end of August with Hori credited as special guest animator. With the closing gap between anime and western animation, expect more exciting collabs of this kind. The best is yet to come.

Final Panel of ONE PIECE Already Planned

Following Eiichiro Oda's first ever TV appearance, the **One Piece** mastermind was interviewed by Fuji TV announcer Daijiro Enami, who shared a snippet of info at the Tokyo premiere of **One Piece Film Gold**. Enami had asked Oda whether **One Piece's** final panel was already planned out, to which he received a definite 'yes'. Oda also assured him, 'it's very cool'. Oda has previously stated that the sprawling swashbuckler is 65% complete, so we probably still have a thirteen-year wait, if not longer, ahead of us before we can see that 'very cool' ending. It better be worth it!

World's Oldest Manga Inspires Original TV Anime

After Ghibli's charming **Chōjū-giga** commercials impressed internationally, it was only a matter of time before a full TV anime adaptation came along. The 'sumi-e' traditional ink paintings depicting life in Japan eight centuries ago, widely considered the 'world's oldest manga', are now inspiring the original anime **Sengoku Chōjū Giga (Sengoku Wildlife Caricatures)**, a re-imagining of the era of samurai in the Warring States Period. The series, which has Takashi Sumida directing at **Yamishibai: Japanese Ghost Stories'** studio ILCA, premieres in October.

SHOWA GENROKU RAKUGO SHINJU Confirms Second Season Premiere

As one of our favourite series of recent years, it was with bated breath we waited for any news of **Showa Genroku Rakugo Shinju's** second season. Its evocative period setting, effortless wit and heart-wrenching drama made it a stand-out for many, and now we have a date. The series returns in January 2017, with the manga's tenth and final volume slated for September release.

PARAPPA THE RAPPER Games' 20th Anniversary Celebrated with Anime Shorts

For STARBURST readers of a certain age, PaRappa the Rapper will need no introduction, and now the beloved, if totally bat-shit crazy, franchise is celebrating its 20th anniversary with a series of anime shorts. But PaRappa isn't the star of the show this time around. Instead, his afflicted teddy friend PJ Berri takes the lead, played by Jun Oosuka (**Prince of Tennis**). The series, titled **PJ Berri no Mugu Mugu Munya Munya**, aired its pilot episode on the late-night variety programme **#Hi Poul** in August, and is set to become a regular segment come October.

Working Replica of NAUSICAA Glider Takes to the Skies in First Test Flight

Artist Kuzuhiko Kachiya has built and flown the glider from Hayao Miyazaki's **Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind**. The jet-powered version of the Möwe (pronounced Mehve) took thirteen years to develop, and completed its first test flight at the Takikawa Skypark in Nakajimacho, Takikawa City. A crowd of hundreds watched the craft's inaugural flight, piloted by Kuzuhiko Kachiya, who compared it to being like a bird in flight. Impressive, for sure, but we'll stick to the ground, thanks.



A MONTHLY
FOCUS ON
THE COSTUMED
ROLE-PLAY SCENE AT
FAN CONVENTIONS
AROUND THE WORLD

COSPLAY CATWALK



READER'S COSPLAY "SPHOOK"



As part of our continuing look at the talented cosplayers who frequent the convention circuit, we have a quick chat with Sphook, one half of NO-LIMIT-COSPLAY...

STARBURST: How long have you been cosplaying for?

Sphook: I have been cosplaying since 2012 and have continued to grow and experiment ever since. I aim to do bigger and better things with each move I make.

Who is your favourite character to cosplay as?

My favourite is probably Summoner Yuna from **Final Fantasy X**; her outfit is so comfortable and fun to wear and she's a great character to be - I just have so much fun! If not Yuna, then Alice - she's such a whimsical character.

How long do you normally spend making the costumes?

Usually a few months, but some take a few weeks - it really depends. My current project Mikleo (**Tales of Zestiria**) will take me a few months but Princess Peach took me under a month to make, so it varies.

MARTIN UNSWORTH

Find out more about Sphook at [facebook.com/No-Limit-Cosplay](https://www.facebook.com/No-Limit-Cosplay).



Credit: MayDay

READER'S COSPLAY "CRASHQUEENBABY"



Credit: Robert John Parker

STARBURST profiles another fantastic cosplayer; this month, Emma (who goes by the name CrashQueenBaby) tells us about her hobby...

STARBURST: How long have you been cosplaying for?

CrashQueenBaby: Since the July of 2014, so not long at all! I did a very casual Misty from **Pokémon** to start with and then a version of Poison Ivy, which has developed through every convention since. Since then costume making has become quite a big hobby of mine!

What is your favourite character to cosplay as?

I have a soft spot for Poison Ivy as she was my first true costume, but in reality,

it is Jinx from League of Legends! That was the first big costume I made and I worked really hard on to get everything correct; I've worn it to every convention possible! Plus it helped with my body confidence and spurred me on to do bigger and better builds in the future!

How long do you normally spend making the costume?

It depends on what I'm making, but I work full time so I maybe dedicate a few hours once a week to sewing/gluing/research. I would say about a few weeks work to make a full costume and a few weeks more panicking about said costume.

MARTIN UNSWORTH

Find out more about Emma by checking out facebook.com/battleroyaleboycrashqueenbaby and following [CrashQueenBabyCosplay](#) on Instagram.



Are you a cosplayer and want to see your work featured in STARBURST?

Drop us an email at cosplay@starburstmagazine.com and we'll print our favourites every month.

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PIXEL JUICE

NEWS AND PREVIEWS
IN GAMING
BY LEE PRICE



POKÉMON GO Losing Daily Users

It's a statistic that we all expected, especially as the hype for **Pokémon Go** starts to dial down, but it is one that Niantic and Nintendo won't welcome all the same. A recent report in Bloomberg has suggested that the game has already lost 15 million daily users.

Now, given that the game was downloaded more than 50 million times, this still likely leaves about 30-40 million who are still playing on a daily basis. However, the downturn, which can be attributed to casuals getting bored of the fad and may also have something to do with the catching glitch that Niantic don't seem to have remedied, is still not great news for the companies. It will be interesting to see how they will react to these figures. With so many Pokémon yet to be added to the game and a bunch of features, like trading and one-on-one battles in the pipeline, it may yet be possible for them to claw back a few million.

Study Shows Online Gaming May Lead to Higher Grades

An Australian study that looked at the grades and gaming habits of 15,000 15-year-old kids in Australia has come to the conclusion that playing games online may boost grades.

Those who played online games almost every day were also found to exceed the national average score for maths by 15 points, while beating the science score by 17.

Alberto Posso, an associate professor at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology, commented on possible reasons for this, stating: "When you play online games you're solving puzzles to move to the next level and that involves using some of the general knowledge and skills in maths, reading and science that you've been taught during the day."

So there you have it, kids. If you ever hear your parents telling you to stop playing games because you'll struggle with your schoolwork, you now have something to point them in the direction of.

COMING SOON



POKÉMON SUN AND MOON PLATFORM: 3DS

RELEASE DATE: NOVEMBER 23RD

Nintendo has already made a mint through Pokémon Go, but it is the core games that many get more excited for. You can expect all of the same sort of goodness you get from any Pokémon game with Sun and Moon, with new monsters and moves, plus some of the existing Pokémon have been given visual upgrades to show how they have adapted to the world the game is set in. These are called Alola forms and represent a new take on the concept, though one that hints at the developers finally running out of ideas for new Pokémon.

PlayStation Now Coming to PC

It's the news that many PC gamers have been waiting for. Sony has officially announced that PlayStation Now is coming to the PC, which means that people who have yet to invest in PS3s and PS4s will have access to a boatload of Sony-exclusive games, like the **Uncharted** series and **The Last of Us**.

A special DualShock 4 adapter will also be released to make it easy to connect your controllers to the PC. PlayStation Now already has a library of 400 games and we are sure that there are many Xbox fans who are salivating at the opportunity to play some real PlayStation classics without having to invest in a new console.

The recommended minimum setup has also been released. Players will need Windows 7 (SP1), 8.1 or 10, in addition to a 3.5 GHz Intel Core i3 or 3.8 GHz AMD A10 or faster. Ideally, you will have 2GB of RAM and 300MB of hard disk space. That shouldn't be too much trouble for most people.

COMING SOON



DISHONORED 2

PLATFORM: PS4, XBOX ONE, PC
RELEASE DATE: NOVEMBER 11TH

It's been quite a while coming but Bethesda is finally ready to bring us the second chapter in the Dishonored series and it's shaping up quite nicely. Players will get the choice between two protagonists, including the first game's Corvo Attano, with the game also featuring the 'chaos' system from the first. Non-lethal takedowns have been added, with Bethesda claiming that the game can be finished without taking a life. All very exciting stuff and we can't wait for the November release.

HALO's Warthog to be Playable in New Forza Game

We wouldn't normally cover the **Forza** games in these pages. Not because of any lack of quality, of course, but it's not really genre fare.

Still, we couldn't resist mentioning that **Halo's** famous Warthog vehicle is going to be playable in the upcoming **Forza Horizon 3**. So if you have ever fantasised about Master Chief giving up all the Covenant killing and entering the world of competitive racing, this may just be the game for you.

METROID PRIME 4 may be Coming

For those who haven't finished **Federation Force**, you may want to look away now.

For everybody else, it appears that the end of Nintendo's controversial **Federation Force** game has hinted at the return of the **Prime** series, which hasn't been seen since the decent **Metroid Prime: Hunters**.

If it proves to be true, it would be a welcome return for the series, which had two stellar games on the Gamecube that did a great job of transporting classic **Metroid** gameplay into the 3D domain.

A post-credits trailer in **Federation Force** shows Slyux, from **Hunters**, apparently hatching a **Metroid** egg. **Prime** producer Kensuke Tanabe has already expressed interest in making a **Metroid Prime** game that focuses on the rivalry between Slyux and Samus Aran, so hopefully this will be what we are going to get.

COMING SOON



STAR TREK: BRIDGE CREW

PLATFORM: PC, PS4

RELEASE DATE: NOVEMBER 29TH

This game isn't going to be any use to you if you haven't become an early VR adopter. For those who have, it is definitely an interesting concept. You are a member of a Federation crew and all of your actions in the game will affect the outcomes in a variety of ways. Your task will be to explore a section of space known as The Trench and it seems like the Klingons are going to play a very active role in the game as well. An interesting early use of VR here and one that will have plenty of appeal to Star Trek fans.

COMING SOON



WATCH DOGS 2

PLATFORM: PS4, XBOX ONE, PC

RELEASE DATE: NOVEMBER 15TH

The first Watch Dogs was meant to be our first real taste of next-gen gaming, but it ended up disappointing on almost all fronts. While not a bad game, there just wasn't anything to make it stand out as a must-have. Ubisoft will be looking to right those wrongs, introducing a new protagonist and setting the sequel in San Francisco. The hacking system, in particular, should play a bigger part in the game, with Ubisoft claiming that the whole thing can be completed through hacking alone. Let's hope we don't get disappointed again.

More RESIDENT EVIL 7 Details

Capcom has been understandably quiet on the **Resident Evil 7** front recently, with the company more than happy to let their playable demos create all of the hype for them.

However, a recent listing on the web, which has since been deleted, has given us a bit more detail on what we can expect from the game.

The listing said: "This is a survival-horror game in which players assume the role of Ethan, a man searching for his missing wife in a derelict mansion. From a first-person perspective, players explore the environment and use pistols, shotguns, flamethrowers, explosives and chainsaws to kill mutant creatures. Combat is accompanied by realistic gunfire, screams of pain, and exaggerated blood-splatter effects."

So it looks like the first-person perspective is being kept, plus we have a name for the main character. We don't know about anybody else, but we are more excited for **Resident Evil 7** than we have been for any game in the series since the fourth.

Konami Announce METAL GEAR SURVIVE

So the first **Metal Gear** game of the post-Kojima era has been announced and it has naturally been met with a bit of a mixed reception.

Metal Gear Survive is apparently set in an alternate timeline to **Metal Gear Solid V**, where a number of wormholes have opened in the sky. It's described as a co-op(!) stealth game where players will pit their wits against living biological threats.

In other words... zombies. The best that Konami could come up with when making a game to add to one of the most innovative series of all time without having the main creative force behind that series available to them is a fucking zombie game.

Bravo, Konami.

Also Something about METAL GEAR V: DEFINITIVE EDITION

Konami has also announced that they will be releasing a definitive edition of **Metal Gear Solid V** that includes **Ground Zeroes**, **Phantom Pain** and all of the DLC.

Of course, anybody who might be interested in this probably has all of that already. It would be nice if they gave us a proper ending and all of the content that was clearly cut from the original release to get it out on time, though.



Adult Swim to Publish TOEJAM AND EARL: BACK IN THE GROOVE

We can't really put into words how happy we are that **ToeJam and Earl** are coming back. For those who missed the classic Mega Drive games, they follow the adventures of two aliens as they get into perilous situations with humans. The first sees them crash land their ship on Earth, resulting in them having to explore the planet to find all of the pieces while avoiding various types of human.

The second sees them returning to their home planet, only to find that it has been infested with humans who clung to their spaceship when they escaped Earth. They then need to capture them with jars and get rid of them. It was everything awesome about the '90s obsession with hip-hop and pseudo-edgy characters.

They are as brilliant as they sound, which is why it was so awesome that a new game got funded via Kickstarter. Adult Swim is officially handling publication and a trailer is available for those who want to find it.

Nintendo Claims It Must Do Better With NX Launch

Nintendo of America head honcho Reggie Fils-Aime has been talking about the need of the company to do better in launching the Nintendo NX, especially in comparison to the Wii U.

In a recent interview he said: "One of the things that we have to do better when we launch the NX - we have to do a better job communicating the positioning for the product. We have to do a better job helping people to understand its uniqueness and what that means for the game playing experience."

Nintendo has apparently decided that the best way to do this is to tell us absolutely naff all about the console, which is due for release in the first quarter of 2017. Might not be doing too well on that front, Reggie.

Hopefully, we'll find out more soon, but the best guess is that the company is again targeting the casual market, which is a volatile one at best and only really latched onto the Wii because it was novel and cheap.

COMING SOON



KILLING FLOOR 2

PLATFORM: PS4, PC, LINUX

RELEASE DATE: NOVEMBER 18TH

Where would we be without another zombie game? **Killing Floor 2** is the follow-up to 2009's **Killing Floor** and offers frantic first-person action and potential co-operation with six people. The big difference here is that each enemy has 22 points on their bodies that offer all sorts of options when it comes to dismemberment and disabling your foes. Think a more advanced version of the system that **Soldier of Fortune** used so many years ago.

COMING SOON



FINAL FANTASY XV

PLATFORM: PS4, XBOX ONE

RELEASE DATE: NOVEMBER 29TH

With the most recent Final Fantasy games not quite hitting the chords that made the series so popular during the PS1 era, Square really need to pull something out of the bag here to get fans on board. It promises to be more open-world than XIII, though still with patches of linearity. There's also a dynamic day and night cycle, which affects the monsters in the game. The battle system appears to be similar to the one used by Kingdom Hearts, representing a simplification that traditional Final Fantasy fans may not be too keen on. We'll see what we get when it's released.

Xbox One S to Improve Frame Rates

The latest news to emerge about the Xbox One S comes in the form of some benchmark tests that appear to show the console will improve on the existing Xbox One's frame rates by about 10%.

Good news for those who really care about such things, we suppose.

KINGDOM HEARTS III May Not Be Coming to Xbox One

Kingdom Hearts III has been removed from the Japanese Xbox One upcoming releases page, which suggests that the game may not be coming out on the console, at least in its native country.

For the record, it can still be seen on the US and UK site, so we reckon that this may be a case of Square noting that the Xbox One is selling terribly in Japan and that it is not worth the risk to release it over there.

Of course, it could be indicative of a wider exclusivity deal as well, but nothing has been confirmed just yet.

THE LATEST
GAMING RELEASES
REVIEWED AND RATED

REVIEWS



DEUS EX: MANKIND DIVIDED

DEVELOPER: EIDOS MONTREAL / PUBLISHER: SQUARE ENIX / PLATFORM: PC, XBOX ONE, PS4 /
RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

In the world of video games, there are few cows more sacred than Deus Ex. Held by some above even the likes of Mario, Mega Man and big name icons of the first generation, the series is best remembered for its genre-breaking cyberpunk story, choices and dynamic ending. Well, that and a terrible sequel which we will not speak of. After 2011's *Human Revolution* revitalized the franchise, it was naturally only a matter of time before Square Enix sought to continue the franchise.

Set two years after the bleak finale to *Human Revolution*'s crisis, the world's brief cybernetic golden age is all but gone. With augmented humans treated as outcasts and resigned to slums thanks to the violent outbursts, tensions are higher than ever, and the Illuminati seek to turn this to their advantage. For Adam Jensen, sole survivor of the Panchaea facility disaster, life has become that much more complicated...

Much of the promotional material has made a point of focusing upon the new abilities above all else, and understandably so. After just a few years, Jensen has undergone a substantial number of upgrades with everything from sword launchers to a vastly improved battery life assisting him in his tasks. It's clear from very early on that Eidos sat down and took a serious look at how players used certain abilities to their advantage, both in terms of offensive strength and the more stealthy approaches. Many of the old niggling

frustrations, such as power draining take-downs and tracking enemy patrols, have been smoothed over, if not fixed entirely. Easily the most welcome among these adjustments is the ranged hacking, allowing you to take down cameras, robots and terminals from the other side of the room.

Each environment has been far better built to take full advantage of these new skills. Even in comparison to *Human Revolution*'s sprawling levels, there are more opportunities to approach a task from just about any angle, or map out shortcuts by using the environment to your advantage. While you can still run through guns blazing, planning and careful advances will often yield some surprising secrets or even a few fun bonuses hidden away in the darkest corners of each environment. More than anything else though, there are more opportunities for characters to react or behave differently depending upon your methods. While stealth is not statistically superior, unlike last time, limiting casualties can open up new story opportunities.

Sadly though, the story is where things take a turn for the worse. Whereas *Human Revolution* offered a diverse and surprisingly memorable ensemble of characters, you'll be hard-pressed to remember a single person here by the time the credits roll. Everyone from the Task Force 29 anti-terrorist unit to the pro-aug extremists are painfully banal, and often alarmingly one-note. The few

attempts to flesh each of them out are also surprisingly clichéd if not downright predictable. *Mankind Divided* seems as if it wants to bring up certain themes, but it never actually tries to explore them in any depth. This also extends to the story itself, as there are no surprises on offer here or solid twists to keep you guessing. Often your first prediction will be the right one, and even as things spiral into hell there's little sense of desperation. There's no point where Jensen or his allies truly seem as if they are in peril, or even a tangible sense of danger building towards the climax.

Worst of all, though, much of the original atmosphere is now gone. While the black/gold tinted combo of the original was done to the point of parody, it helped the world remain distinct and definitively cyberpunk, whereas here much of the world could be from almost any old science fiction setting. Prague is a big disappointment in this regard, bereft of the strong sense of identity which benefited Shanghai or Detroit. It's almost alarming to say the whole thing is soulless, a problem which is only exacerbated by the limited mission structure. Each mission lasts barely long enough for you to start to enjoy it before closing out, and lacks the sprawling lively sense of previous series locations.

Let this be clear - this is by no means another *Invisible War*. However, for every step forwards it makes, *Mankind Divided* takes at least two backwards. Without that strong narrative core, it simply lacks its predecessors' staying power. You'll likely remember this more for Jensen's new arsenal of wonderful toys over its complex themes or characters, so keep that in mind before buying it.

CALLUM SHEPARD

★★★★★★★★★ 7





SAVAGE: RESURRECTION

DEVELOPER & PUBLISHER: S2 GAMES LLC / PLATFORM: PC / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Given its innate difficulties, the RTS/FPS sub-genre was always a small niche at the best of times. While it certainly had its fair share of hits, the innate difficulties in controlling a massive army without an overhead view was something few developers truly could overcome. Now, years after the original Savage was criminally forgotten, S2 Games have decided to put their own spin

on things.

The world on offer here is a mash-up of fully-fledged science fiction and high fantasy elements. With everything from four-legged mechs to orcs, it offers the chance to engage in both ranged firefights and melee duels at the same time. The unique game structure means you have one person building up the base and ordering about forces, but each

player-controlled allied unit can perform stunts, movements and kills above that of the average AI controlled mook. This naturally opens up the way for a high skill-ceiling environment, something helped by the wide variety of weapons available to players.

Teamwork and communication here is essential, hinging on everyone doing their job well. That said, there are plenty of points where a team can be carried through a match despite a poor commander or inexperienced allies. Each match offers you the chance to gain resources from NPCs or the environment, meaning you can build up your strength if the enemy is initially overwhelming you. Atop of this, the asymmetrical nature of faction-specific skills (especially in close combat) means you can gain a slight edge by blocking strikes or bypassing difficult terrain elements.

The downside to playing Savage is an alarmingly low population. If you have ever been frustrated at Overwatch for waiting just a few minutes to get a game, you're going to be gnashing your teeth at this

one relentlessly. Even accepting that though, there are more than a few flawed ideas which keep holding it back. The small maps leave little room for complex manoeuvres, many of the tech-tree elements between factions are identical, and the base-building element lacks the complexity of pure RTS titles like Starcraft. None are truly bad enough to destroy the game, but they do relegate a potentially outstanding game into merely being great instead.

After all that, is Savage: Resurrection worth it? Absolutely. While you might have an uphill struggle at first, the end result is a very welcome return to form which is as open to new players as old veterans. S2 Games have done a fantastic job with this one, and the end result brilliantly balances two very different genres. If you have any interest at all in blending Halo-style combat with C&C base building, this is definitely the game for you.

CALLUM SHEPARD

★★★★★★★★★ 7



THE GIRL AND THE ROBOT

DEVELOPER & PUBLISHER: FLYING CARPETS GAMES / PLATFORM: PC, MAC, LINUX / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Indie games always seem to take one of two directions. Either they promise the world, attempting to construct a vast universe of possibilities by words, choices or (when required) smoke and mirrors; or they stick to a distinctly minimalist approach and build the game to make everything out of nothing. The Girl and the Robot is definitely the latter option, offering an experience thematically similar to that of Submerged or Toren, but backing up those ideas with far

more mechanical substance.

You play as a child and her robotic guardian, attempting to flee from legions of assailants after she is mysteriously trapped in a castle. Who they are or how they got there is never fully explained, but rather than feeling frustrating it fits in perfectly with its Studio Ghibli-esque aesthetics and atmosphere. There's an aged charm to it which means you can just sit back and enjoy the ride, an aspect which goes from the tale to the mechanics.

The core mechanics are one of those Zelda-on-a-budget affairs, where the real meat of the game comes down to button and block puzzles over combat. In switching back and forth between the girl and the robot himself, you use each of their strengths to progress forwards, from the girl's ability to crawl through small tunnels to the robot's greater weight. Most are straightforward, but more than a few offer some surprising twists that can require you to forget all you've learned up to that point. While much of this is certainly nothing truly revolutionary, The Girl and the Robot handles it well enough that this will rarely drag down the experience.

At a mere four hours long, this is one you're sure to breeze through in a single afternoon at most. Combined with the very limited replay value that's sure to put off more than a few people when combined with other flaws, such as the very limited combat and unfortunately samey environments. The minimalism does work in its favour, but the mono-coloured design only truly works for so long. Plus, let's face it, some players probably won't be able

to get over the dated graphics despite its style, and the ending is something of an abrupt cliffhanger conclusion. There's some obvious sequel baiting at work here, but it sadly fails to truly tie up any loose ends before closing out.

When all is said and done, The Girl and the Robot is inoffensively charming. It's short, sweet and well presented, but you might find the experience lacking despite bucking more than a few current industry trends. Give it a look if you're interested, but don't expect it to change the way you look at games.

CALLUM SHEPARD

★★★★★★★★★ 6





GAL*GUN: DOUBLE PEACE

DEVELOPER: INTI CREATES / PUBLISHER: PQUBE / PLATFORM: PS4, PS VITA / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Have you ever looked at the video gaming genre of dating sims and wished to yourself that it involved more shooting? If your answer to that last question was yes, then this is the game for you. In *Gal*Gun: Double Peace*, you play a character with a rather strange dilemma, as an angel attempts to fire Cupid's arrows at him, and hits him with an overdose (apparently that is possible) and now every woman he comes across will throw themselves at him. This would be bad enough but he

also has a day to find his true love or no one will show the slightest bit of interest in him for the rest of his life.

Most of your time in this game will be spent with the rail gun gameplay. You will fend off the many girls after your character by shooting them with pheromones, with extra points gained for 'ecstasy shots', and yes it is just as silly as it sounds. It is also very fast-paced and the game keeps it in short, fun bursts so that it stays entertaining throughout the

game. In between levels, you will have the option to upgrade your stats, and while it won't make that much difference in the levels themselves, doing so is vital. If you don't want the boss battles to feel like they are dragging on and becoming stale.

As mentioned at the start of the review, this is a dating sim, and that is most apparent in the other chief aspect of the game play; the rubbing. At any point during the levels you can choose to pacify your 'admirers' by activating a mini game in which you rub them, rather than shoot the pheromones at them. The game also finds a way to include this mechanic in other aspects of the game, for some reason rubbing is also the answer when one of your love interests is stuck in a window. It feels a bit out of place after the fast-paced nature of the shooting and there is no denying that it will creep some people out (this game is set in a high school), but it doesn't come up relatively often and it is possible to ignore it for the most part.

The dating sim aspect is most prominent in the plot. Near the beginning of the game you will have to make a choice about which love interest you will pursue. Which

option you pick determines how the story will play out and what boss fights you will encounter. Each playthrough is relatively short but you will also unlock further storylines to try when you go back to the game. In our playthroughs we experienced tales of financing a high school band, living up to the role of hunting demons, and helping a demon pass her exams (apparently even demons need to pass some tests to qualify). The different nature of the stories help keep the game interesting despite the relatively short time of any particular playthrough.

There is no denying that *Gal*Gun: Double Peace* is a bizarre game but that is the game's strength. If you are a fan of dating sims, the rail gun game play could offer a refreshing change of pace, and if you aren't it might be different enough from the rest of the genre to keep you engaged when you otherwise might not have been. It is a Japanese soap opera with shooting, and if that thought appeals to you, give it a look.

GARETH EVANS

★★★★★★★★★ 7



BREACHED

DEVELOPER: DRAMA DRIFTERS / PUBLISHER: NKIDU GAMES INC. / PLATFORM: PC, MAC, LINUX / RELEASE DATE: OUT NOW

Nothing builds a haunting atmosphere quite like isolation. With the right approach, setting a player down among a hostile world makes it seem all the more vibrant, all the more alive and engaging. It's why gamers fondly remember the likes of *Tallon IV* or the *Spencer Mansion* over a decade after playing them, and the developers of *Breached* seemed

set to recreate this experience once again. Unfortunately, they fell just short of true success.

The game's story is one of survival. You play as Corus Valott, a man awakening from cryostasis only to find his world in ruins and shelter damaged. With only eight days of supplies left, you are tasked with using drones to scavenge resources from the world beyond, and

learn just what happened out there.

The premise itself is a good one, and both the visual and literary narrative elements are spot on. Day after day you wake up, reading some of Valott's thoughts, selecting certain choices to alter what he records in his journal. From there on, you can examine past messages, attempt to synthesise fuel from recovered materials and deploy drones to several excavation sites. Despite the limited options on screen, the minimalism proves to be remarkably immersive, as there is little to distract you from the ticking clock. You can only do so much each day, and every drone mission can only return with a very limited resource payload, which requires careful planning.

However, while the visuals on each drone site are striking and the mysterious energy anomalies remarkably menacing despite a simplistic design, several elements undermine the core appeal of *Breached*. For starters, every area is little more than a glorified scavenger

hunt with little in the way of direction or real hints, which can leave players utterly lost or prowling aimlessly about for hours at a time. This only becomes a bigger issue with return visits, and finding the already sparsely scattered resources becomes a needle in a haystack affair. This also detracts from the sense of desperation, as you can spend any amount of time at these sites and only lose the exact same number of hours each day. Even with the multiple endings on offer, the fact these expeditions can be so arduous means you'll rarely want to replay the game more than once.

Breached is a middling game but a decent one. Patient gamers who are willing to forgive a few mechanical limitations in favour of a strong story, atmosphere and visuals are sure to get a kick out of this one. That said, if you never quite gelled with the likes of *The Vanishing of Ethan Carter*, give this one a miss.

CALLUM SHEPARD

★★★★★★★★★ 5

RETRO BYTES

A LOOK BACK AT
THE WORLD OF
RETRO GAMING
BY CHRIS JACKSON



GRANNY'S GARDEN (BBC MICRO, 1983)

Here's a real blast from the past! Coming from a time when having a single computer in the classroom was a cause of great excitement to youngsters, *Granny's Garden* is an educational text adventure game that was widely used in schools in the early 1980s to encourage children to practise their reading and writing. Readers of a certain age may have purposely hidden any memories of this game in the darkest recesses of their brains in an effort to leave all traces of this particularly terrifying garden-loving hag firmly in the distant past, so before we go any further we here at STARBURST should probably apologise for any hideous flashbacks you may experience as a result of reading the next couple of pages. And for the rest of you - you have been warned...

The BBC Micro was developed by Acorn Computers at the request of the British Broadcasting Corporation, in response to predictions of an impending technological revolution which was forecast to see a huge upsurge in the popularity of home computers. Hoping to convince the masses that videogames could involve more than shooting aliens and programming wasn't just for nerds, the BBC announced their 'Computer Literacy Project' in the early 1980s and released the BBC Microcomputer (to give

it its full title) shortly before Christmas 1981. Backed by the imaginatively named *The Computer Programme*, a ten-part prime time sales pitch masquerading as a TV show that introduced viewers to the various features and functions of the machine, the Micro was a huge success in the UK, especially in schools where it was discovered that teachers could capitalise on the then-current Atari/Space Invaders craze by tricking kids into doing classwork

by playing computer games.

So picture the scene - it's the early '80s, you're not very old, maybe five or six, and mum's just dropped you off at school but all you really want to do is go home and play Pac-Man. But what's this? Teacher is talking to that slightly greasy-looking fellow with the weird two-inch white patch in his otherwise jet black bowl-cut hair, known only to us as 'The IT Man'. Could it mean... Yes! We're probably getting the Micro this afternoon! Although in our case, it turned out that it could also have meant that teacher was actually having an affair with the IT man and was planning to run away with him during the summer holidays, but that's a whole other story for another time and place.

In any event, these hushed conversations were actually a genuine part of curriculum planning; at some point during the day a huge trolley would be wheeled into the classroom, transporting a huge big box monitor and a few clunky pieces of beige hardware. Despite its name, the Micro was far from small - the keyboard was a huge cumbersome box that you needed the world's strongest man to come in and set up for you, and the disc drive alone was nearly as big as some of today's home computers. That said, in those days there was very little that compared to the sheer joy of sliding a 5.25 inch floppy into the drive and experiencing the satisfying sensation of turning the locking clip into place. Fun times were about to happen!

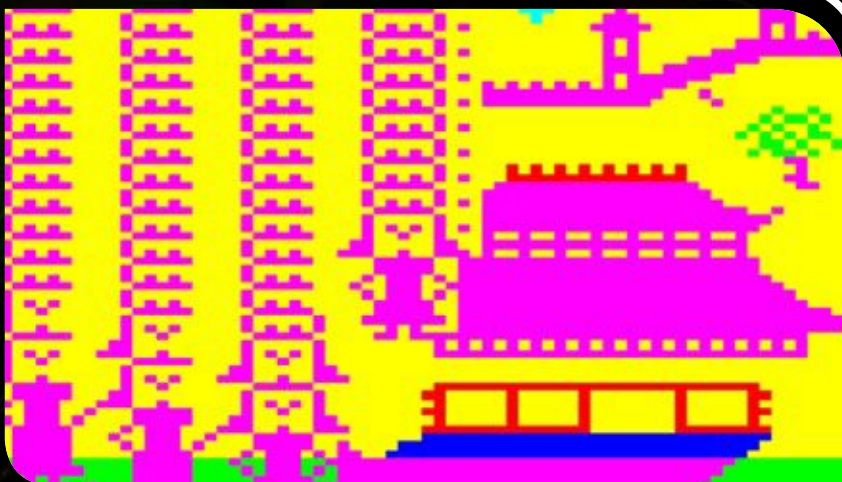
But what game would we choose to play? There was *Repton*, a bizarre *Dig-Dug*-style exploration game set to a jolly



fairground/circus type soundtrack, in which a snake-like humanoid had to explore a series of underground mazes to find diamonds within a certain time limit. We would ignore *Arcadians* because that was just *Space Invaders* and we could all play that at home. *Doctor Who and the Mines of Terror* was promising, but, ultimately, too complicated with its awkward controls and silly inventory system. *Podd* was an early teachers' favourite because of its 'educational' nature - a big red blob reminiscent of a tomato with a face appeared on screen along with the words "Podd can..." Then players were invited to type in words to complete the sentence in the hope of building up a list of things that Podd was able to do. Unfortunately, *Podd* vanished from the disc box after Mrs Meredith found out that we were spending all afternoon trying to find out which undesirable bodily functions Podd was able to perform. The poor lad must be absolutely bursting for a plop by now. Then again, if he really was a tomato, he wouldn't have needed to do that anyway. But if that was the case, why was he able to glide, sneeze and vanish? It is a mystery. As a slightly more serious and historically important side note to all of this frivolity, the Micro was also notable for seeing the very first version of David Braben's space trading simulator *Elite*, but that was a bit too taxing for our young minds. It still is even today, if we're honest.

No, none of these games were good enough for us. We wanted fantasy, we wanted adventure, and we wanted terror. We didn't ask for much. The only thing that would provide exactly what we were looking for, and what all of this nonsense has been leading up to, was the absolute insanity and complete sensory overload of *Granny's Garden*.

After recovering from the dazzling effects of the garishly bright red and yellow title screen, you find yourself in a clearing surrounded by twelve rather neatly arranged trees. The game asks you to guess which tree you think might be magical, although there are no clues



or hints to help with the decision so players are left to randomly input grid coordinates until they stumble upon the correct answer. After passing through the forest, some harsh and tuneless 'music' welcomes us to the snowy Kingdom of the Mountains. We can see a cave in the distance, and the game asks us if we want to go inside. You don't really have a choice, because if you say 'no' the game will ignore your reply and send you into the cave regardless. Once inside, we are told that the King and Queen have been locked away by an evil witch, who has also stolen their six children and hidden them across the land. Agreeing to help the King and Queen, their pet raven flies in and offers to accompany you on your journey. And what a journey it is!

Our first stop, as advised by the raven, is a woodcutter's house. The woodcutter has been scared away by the witch and she is now using his house as a hiding place for one of the royal children. Before we can enter, we're given a basic puzzle to solve and then asked if we would like to take any of the items that are lying around the place. Inside, we're given various rooms to explore, each with their own puzzles and hints to discover and decipher. Oh no! There's a

snake on the stairs! Good job we picked up that stick, we can use it to batter the snake to death. But wait! 'The stick was an evil magic wand. Now the witch is coming!' Sure enough, the witch appears along with her own heinous soundtrack of tauntingly awful bleeps and squelches, captures us and sends us home. What a horrid old cow!

If we'd picked up an apple outside the house, we could have thrown that at the snake and killed it, gaining access to a vital clue regarding the whereabouts of the hidden kid. Turns out she's been turned into a broomstick hidden in a cupboard! The quest to find the other missing children is filled with similar puzzles, all aiming to encourage younger players to use their problem-solving powers to complete various tasks. Some of the things you have to do are just downright bizarre though - feeding bags of chips to baby dragons, chatting with talking toadstools, flying across a pond on the back of a butterfly, and escaping the clutches of a fearsome vicious dog by summoning a bee to sting it on the arse.

While all of this is jolly good fun, it's worth remembering that one single bad decision could see the arrival of the evil witch to send you back to the beginning of the game. That's the last thing you want, particularly if you make it to the final *Land Of Mystery* level, which involves a massive amount of backtracking to gain all the clues and items that are necessary for finding the last two children and getting everyone home safely. Granny wasn't clever enough to know how to save our progress, but luckily she was kind enough to include a password system which lets us pick things up at a later date if we should get caught or simply be too frightened to go any further...

For those of us who were around at the time, and even for anyone who wasn't but wants to experience something that had schoolkids of the '80s squealing with fright (and no, we're not talking about disgraced radio presenters), the original version of 'Granny's Garden' is still being sold online by an official distributor, and there's even an upgraded remake for iOS devices. Nothing will compare to being there at the time, but then that's nostalgia for you, folks. Until next time!



ROLL FOR DAMAGE

ED FORTUNE
GUIDES YOU
THROUGH THE
REALM OF
TABLETOP GAMING



WIZARD'S ACADEMY (CREDIT: SEAN ANDREW MURRY)

It feels more like a card game than a themed bit of sorcery, but that's okay as it's also fairly quick to pick up and a neat way to get non-gaming friends who play cards into the hobby.

It's also an interesting example of what Kickstarter can do. The artwork is very pretty and the theme is very strong thanks to the crowdfunding.

Of course, flinging fireballs and acquiring power is all well and good, but sometimes what you want to be is an actual wizard. You know: pointy hat, white beard, dodgy memory, that sort of thing. *Abraca-What?* simulates this experience by being a sort of wizardly 'guess who'. The game's actual backstory involves some sort of decaying magical source and magical people messing with forces they don't understand, but every time we've played it the game lends itself to pretending to be a daft old duffer who just happens to be able to command cosmic forces.

The set-up is pretty simple; there are eight types of spell, from the very simple 'summon healing potion' to the very rare 'summon dragon'. These spells are represented by tiles. The tiles are shuffled and four are 'vaulted'. You then put five more tiles 'face first'. Y'see, you don't know what spells you have. Everyone else does. You can sort of figure it out, and once a spell is cast, they go on a special board so you can see what spells are left still to cast. The aim of the game is to knock out your fellow wizards. Each spell is numbered, with the dragon summoning spell being number one and the healing spell number eight. The rest of the spells either give you clues as to what spells you may have or damage the other wizards.

So to cast a spell, you have to guess. You can cast as many spells as you want, but you have to count upwards, so no starting with the healing potion. Get it wrong and you take damage, potentially knocking you out of the game. It might seem pretty basic (and it is), but it's also very, very silly.

A similarly magically themed game that involves a heck of a lot of guess work and a fair amount of luck is 3DTotal Games' latest offering, *Wizard's Academy*. The set-up is that you're playing one of a team of very rubbish apprentices. You take the role of one of the worst students ever. One of you is a walking tree, another is a kleptomaniac and yet another has accidentally turned themselves into a bear. All of you would rather be doing another more interesting thing. Unfortunately for you, something

With Harry Potter back on the book shelves and Doctor Strange coming to the silver screen very soon, I think it's fair to say that the general public still haven't fallen out of favour with wizards and their mystical hi-jinks. Of course, magic is a mainstay of gaming culture; one of the backbones of tabletop gaming is a card game called *Magic*, after all. Over in the secret STARBURST Thunderdome, we've been donning our wizard robes an awful lot recently.

Partially this is because I got my hands on a copy of *Manasurge*. The game did very well on Kickstarter recently, which is no surprise as crowdfunding is one of the big sources of interesting indie games. Luckily, it's also been hitting the shelves of your local friendly gaming store recently.

It's one of those games that feels more like a traditional card game (the sort you play with regular playing cards) but mixed in with some nifty fantasy

concepts; imagine if *Uno* and *Fluxx* had decided to have a wizard-shaped baby and you're pretty much there. The game imagines that you're duelling wizards trying to harness raw magical power. You're essentially building spells out of raw magic, but if you get it wrong, the spell will turn on you.

The game is composed of a very fancy-looking deck of cards and a pile of counters called 'mana shards'. You start with five cards in your hand and the aim of the game is to earn twelve mana shards. The cards divide into five suits, each with an elemental theme; metal, lightning, earth, fire, and frost. You have to play a card of the same suit or the same number, or one of the special spell-altering cards. Fail to play a card and BOOM! , you get injured in some way. The game rewards matching cards with mana crystals, and punishes failure with redraws and shuffling. It's a simple affair and moves pretty quickly.

has gone horribly wrong in the magic school that you attend and you're the only people who can save it.

It's a fairly complex set-up for a game. The academy itself is randomly generated by drawing tiles. One room that you have to put in is the room with a huge magical crystal in it. Counters are placed in this room, which represent the school's magical power. The counters can be used to negate bad effects during the game and you can also lose counters if you allow too many terrible things to happen.

Another board has a list of 'spell cards' left face down. Spells can be cast by spending rune tokens. Rune tokens can be acquired by going into certain rooms, whilst avoiding fire, flood, imps and other things that could be going wrong in the building. Typically if you can find the right spell, you can save the school from whatever horrible thing is happening to it. But to do that, you'll have to try as many combinations as possible.

Once the spell is cast, you know where it is on the board. It still goes face down and some events shuffle the spell board. You can turn the card over permanently (and make it immune to shuffling) if you can get to the library. Of course, it's a magical library, so that's not always going to be so easy.

Gameplay pretty much means that you wander around a dangerous building in which all sorts of hazards are running round trying to destroy you and the academy itself. The pieces themselves are lovely, especially the imps, who are constantly getting loose, blowing stuff up and stealing your stuff.

It's a game created by Gregory



MANA SURGE (CREDIT: MIKE SMITH)

Carlsaw, who's one of my favourite games designers and the genius behind another favourite at The STARBURST Secret Gaming Thunderdome, *Escape the Nightmare*.

Described as a challenging fifty-four card cooperative real time trading game (with optional singing), *Escape the Nightmare* is a very fast and deeply weird game. The back story states that you're trapped in a nightmare with other people. At the moment, you're stuck in a mixed nightmare and you need to pare it

down to something more manageable so you can escape.

Each of you has a hand of mixed cards. Each one is a type of nightmare. Maybe it's insects or tentacles or abduction. You swap cards between each other in an attempt to get one suit of horrors to deal with.

It's not that simple though. Every time you draw a card, you have a task to do. Maybe it's to say the words 'Help Me' and not be helped. Maybe it's to stand up and sing the song of your people, or to only talk by buzzing. The other problem is that one of these cards simply says 'It's Coming'. If you have that card, the only thing you can do is count down from 20. If you reach 0, well it's here and the game ends.

As you may be able to imagine, the game it is utter chaos. You're trying to remember exactly what card you've just played (in case you accidentally help someone), whilst ignoring the countdown and the person singing, buzzing and generally being cursed.

This sort of nonsense of course makes the game a marvellous spectator sport and also a great way to warm up any game.

I'll sign off this month's column by asking you, gentle reader, what you are playing. Given that *Star Wars X-Wing* recently outsold industry giant *Warhammer 40,000*, it seems the games are changing. That said, I also recently played *Warhammer Quest: Silver Tower* and I have to say it's probably the best game of its kind out on the market today, beating classic *HeroQuest* and *Zombicide Black Plague* hands down. But let me know what your gaming table looks like via the usual methods.

Ed Fortune can be tweeted at @ed_fortune and contacted via ed.fortune@starburstmagazine.com



WIZARD'S ACADEMY (CREDIT: MIKE SMITH)



WATTO'S EMPORIUM

STUFF WE LIKED FROM
AROUND THE WEB
THIS MONTH WITH
JACK BOTTOMLEY

A (St)range of Gear

When concerning ourselves with movie merchandise, it is always a weird and wonderful (well, usually) occasion, but at this time of the year, the big hitters generally die down as we move nearer and nearer to the C-word (no, not that one). But this fall, something strange lurks in the autumn schedule: Marvel Studios' **Inception**-y take on **Doctor Strange**. Starring the ever-popular Benedict Cumberbatch as the powerful sorcerer (good to see a Doctor unphased by the setbacks with the NHS), this hopes to be another winner in the ever-expanding MCU (see our preview on page 18). So, as the film approaches, open your mind - and your wallet - to the a selection of strange stuff out there.

The first thing we found, for all you cool kids who are regular cosplayers, is this Doctor Strange Costume, over at **Azure Costume**. It may be a little pricey (OK, a lot) but the outfit's replication of our sharply dressed magical marvel's (pun intended) appearance in the comics is spot on. It would be hard to look more dashing, forget what Edna Mode says, you can't beat a good cape. And secondly, and far more in many people's financial ballpark, is this very cosmic-looking jumper from **ebay.com** by flair-merchandise. Decorated by Cumberbatch's hero, alongside the 'open your mind' slogan, this jumper is a great buy for fans of the Master of the Mystic Arts.

DOCTOR STRANGE FULL COSTUME - £208.05
AVAILABLE FROM AZCOSTUME.COM

DOCTOR STRANGE JUMPER - £14.99
AVAILABLE FROM EBAY.COM



STARBURST

Winter is Coming

We don't mean to sound menacing with that sub-heading (well, we do a bit) but as we all know, the end of the summer always means that winter is not far on the horizon. So get your cold season battle gear ready by visiting hboshopeu.com, who are prepared for the clash with cold, frolic with frost and war with winter, with this cozy Targaryen-branded set, which includes gloves, a scarf and a beanie hat. A perfect purchase, unless you belong to another house, then you'd probably rather freeze than buy Targaryen clobber... well, that is if you take **GoT** as seriously as we do.

And also on the site is a range - and we mean a shed load - of **Game of Thrones** socks. We know what you are thinking... socks? The great enemy of excitement? Those despicable foot-hugging charlatans that are the bane of most people's Christmas? But hear us out because hboshopeu.com has everything from socks brandishing Lannister and Stark emblems to socks decorated with a Westeros map. However our favourite of the bunch has to be the dragon-scaled design, which look superb and will be one of those pair of socks you wear with shorter trousers just to show off... or is that just us?

TARGARYEN SCARF, GLOVES AND HAT SET - £43.99

GAME OF THRONES SOCKS - £6.99 EACH

HOUSE LOGO DESIGN SOCKS - £15.99 EACH

ALL AVAILABLE FROM HBOSHOPEU.COM



KUBO is Cool

Kubo and The Two Strings is Laika Animation's newest stop-motion feature and by all accounts is another winner for the superb tellers of stories and animators of characters. So if you are in the mood for a song, dance and action adventure, then head on over to redbubble.com and get your hands on this neat shirt by iasminsheritare, which uses one of the film's many gorgeously realised posters to fill out your entire torso. Raise your weapon-wielding arm in the air and shout out to the gift of animation.

KUBO AND THE TWO STRINGS GRAPHIC SHIRT - £23.34

AVAILABLE FROM REDBUBBLE.COM



Fight the Dead, Fear the Living, Wear the Gear

As you may all be aware, with the passing of summer and the entering of autumn comes the expectation of the new season of **The Walking Dead** (lumber over to page 44 for our preview of the latest season). However, to continue this issue's Emporium's unexpectedly warm wear vibe, we happened across this beanie hat over at beltsbucklestees.com, which may come with the show's tagline warning but looks particularly charming and comfortable. Ironical to say considering how hot, sweaty, and death-filled the series is. Bring on Season Seven!

WALKING DEAD BEANIE - £15
AVAILABLE FROM BELTSBUCKLESTEEES.COM



WORDS: ED FORTUNE / PHOTOS: ANNE DAVIES

SUMMER IN THE CITY London ExCel Royal Victoria Dock London 12-14TH August 2016

STARBURST Magazine is always on the lookout for new and exciting genre-related things. The current trend amongst the younger generation of fans is to put everything and anything on media-sharing site YouTube, so when we heard that there was an event especially for fans of that very thing, we had to go and take a look. The video site is a key source for all sorts of new talent, after all.

This meant that we simply had to attend London-based YouTube fan event, **Summer in The City**. **SitC** has been running since 2009 and has grown to become the major annual gathering for fans of UK-based YouTube celebrity culture. What began as a simple meeting in a park by some enthusiasts has grown into a major worldwide event, growing in stature to the likes of Vidcon and other similar new media-style events.

The first day of the event was the

Creator and Industry Day, with panels and discussions focused on how to make product for YouTube. Panels included the likes of *YouTube as a Source for News*, *Monetisation: How Creators are Making a Living Online* and *How to Vlog*. YouTube employee Anna Bartoskova, who manages the site's talent for a living, gave an excellent talk on how to produce a creative product and how to design your show. Other panels explained everything from the basics of filming to becoming a brand influencer. It was also the quietest day of the event; the attendees were mostly those with YouTube channels of their own looking to promote their own stuff. Strangely, we noticed a large number of teenagers carrying ukuleles!

The stalls were a bit of a mixed bag, all told. Books written by YouTube stars have sold very well in the past year, so all of the major publishers had a stall of some description. Penguin outshone everyone by offering convention-goers the chance to record audio books. All the book stalls were filled with fun freebies and interesting stuff to do, while other stalls included media companies hawking their services as well as numerous sellers of interesting-looking handmade tat. These were dwarfed by the presence of various funfair rides, with fun being the priority of most of the attendees.

This is the first year that the logistics behind the event have been handled by those masters of fun, MCM, and this change is notable in the sense that no-one negatively noticed their involvement. Stalwart professionals, the team at MCM ensured that everything ran very, very smoothly.

For many, the primary appeal was the various stars from YouTube itself. Queues for the various frustratingly talented and young people were well managed and the stars themselves very happy to pose with their fans.

The Saturday and Sunday were much, much busier events. Panels more diverse, covering all aspects of the Vlog genre, and live entertainment - courtesy of the stars themselves - also formed an integral part of the event. The key draw, however, was the attendees themselves. This was an uber-social affair, with a great many talented types turning up to meet up and hang out.

Summer in the City may seem like an unusual choice for genre lovers, but it's a rich resource for the filmmaker on a budget, and a place where many a great dream project can begin.

Keep up to date with future shows at sitc-event.co.uk.



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PAUL MOUNT'S



Seasons end and seasons start as this temporary time in the shade comes to a close for TV Zone...

For regular readers of **Paul Mount's TV Zone**, you'll have noticed that things have been a little different around these parts for the past two issues, and I don't just mean references to chasm-esque body parts (sincere apologies about that). No, I mean how the column's titular host has been sunning himself, having a bevy of beauties waiting on his every possible need (easy now!), and taking in plenty of interesting sights (and that was just at the **STARBURST International Film Festival!**). But alas, all mediocre things must come to an end, and thus my time on **TV Zone** is concluded with this very article that you've decided to lay your eyes upon. As of next month, the ever-brilliant Mr. Mount will be back to reclaim his territory – for now, though, it's time to make a mess of the place before he returns.

SCREAM NO MORE

I guess it's only right to start with a show whose then-upcoming finale I touched on towards the end of last month's **TV Zone**. And by that I mean the much-maligned **Scream: The TV Series**. When it was first announced that MTV were working on a **Scream** series, many an eyebrow was raised. After a trashy-yet-addictive first season, even further eyebrows were piqued at the news of a second season of torment for the locals of poor Woodsboro, and that's without touching on the torment placed upon us viewers. And not the good sort of torment – y'know, like how **Bates Motel** can make your skin itch but all in a charming, rich and impactful way. No, **Scream** tormented its viewers by giving them a glossy, soulless show that had no depth, no fantastic performances, and no stunning exploration into something of interest. Instead, just churned-out, formulaic fodder that would have Wes

Craven turning in his grave.

So Season Two of **Scream** has now come to a close, and did it manage to turn things around after the bland opening first year? To put it simply, no. At times, the second season did indeed top its predecessor, but there were also moments that felt as stupid as handing Michael Bay the keys to the **Transformers** franchise. As expected, the second season again saw generic teenagers offed at every turn, and even its hard-hitting moments fell flat and disappointed. In fact, there's a very good argument to say that what has kept us all watching **Scream** throughout both of its seasons has been nothing more than the 'whodunit' factor; regardless of the lack of quality of the series, there's still that urge to find out just who the killer and mastermind behind all of the

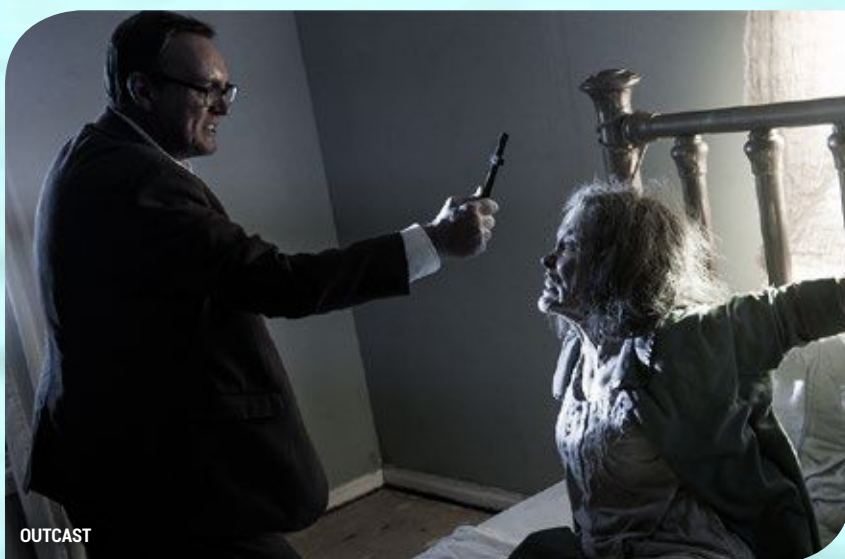
bloodshed really is. But even then, the end of **Scream's** second season threw up nearly as many questions as it did answers, which irked many a long-pained viewer who really, really, really wanted the show to call it a day after the conclusion of its most recent season. Now whilst we were given a cliffhanger ending of sorts, it actually appears that Season Three of **Scream** may not ever come to be. Instead, MTV has confirmed that a two-hour Halloween special will air in October that will answer any lingering questions that the series has. With that being the case, do we really need a third season if all loose ends have been tied up? No, we don't, and that's hopefully what will happen. MTV is already unlikely to renew **Scream** for Season Three, although there is talk that Netflix, who also screened the two seasons to date, may actually opt to give the show a new season. So with that said... Dear Netflix, pretty please with a cherry on top and the promise of sexual favours from a well-known TV 'celebrity', can we just let Woodsboro rest in peace and send Ghostface out to pasture? Much love and deepest regards from all at **TV Zone**. PS: Said 'celebrity' totally doesn't have any chasm-like body parts regardless of what you've heard. Thanks.

OUTSTANDING

From one horror-centric show to another, and FOX's **Outcast** has now concluded its first season. Fortunately, unlike **Scream**, this has been a true TV highlight of 2016 to date. In fairness, the current top tier highlights likely stand as **Stranger Things** and the fourth season of **Bates Motel**, but efforts such as **Outcast** and **Preacher** really aren't all that far behind in the quality stakes; it's just that **Stranger Things** and **Bates Motel** are exceedingly good (like a Mr. Kipling cake). With Patrick Fugit and Philip Glenister at the fore, **Outcast** has been constantly beautiful, brutal, blunt, and effortlessly brilliant throughout



SCREAM: THE TV SERIES - SEASON 2



OUTCAST

its ten-episode début season. One of the more enjoyable facets of the series is how no single person amongst its list of principal and supporting characters is particularly squeaky clean; everybody has their own demons, be they figuratively or literally, and each and every character has at least some modicum of a dark side to them, even those with an unrelenting belief that the magic man above the clouds will erase the world of all evil. Can I get an 'Amen'? Oh, testify!

Whether it's the very demons themselves that turn up – which is refreshingly not over-used during the first season – or the fact that so many of the main characters have their own darker sides or backgrounds, there's an ever-impending feeling of dread draped across all of **Outcast's** offerings, and it's delivered in a stunningly minimalistic way. Sure, there are those heart-wrenching, fear-inducing, fingernail-destroying moments that shocked viewers to their very core, but so much of the eerie, creepy, disturbing part of the series is the simple approach it takes; dull, drained colours are masterfully used, whilst the gloomy lighting always leaves us with feverish anticipation as to just what could be lurking in the corners of our screen or just out of shot. And even better, **Outcast** has managed to leave its viewers with that ever-great feeling: that things are just getting started as the first season was merely placing the chess pieces at what promises to be a long and hard slug ahead for Fugit's Kyle Barnes.

REBOOTED

Moving swiftly from one fan-favourite show to another, and **Mr. Robot** is well underway with its second season. In fact, by the time you're reading this you may well have even finished Season Two of the Sam Esmail-created show. But let's be honest, whilst the series' second season is far from bad, it's not quite managed to hit the heights of its début year. Given how the first season

dropped such huge revelations, such as Christian Slater's character really being the father of Rami Malek's Elliot or the secrets behind Mr. Robot, the second year of the series was always going to face a whole set of new problems. Like I said, Season Two has been enjoyable and interesting, it's just struggled to hit the heights or keep the anticipation and intrigue as much as the previous season. Then again, as we've gone to print, there are still some episodes left to come of the current run, so maybe there're big shockers in there that we've yet to see. After all, so much of the shock and awe around the first season came during the closing episodes. Even then, though, the groundwork of the first two-thirds of the second season doesn't feel as appealing or frankly interesting as the first two-thirds of **Mr. Robot's** previous series.

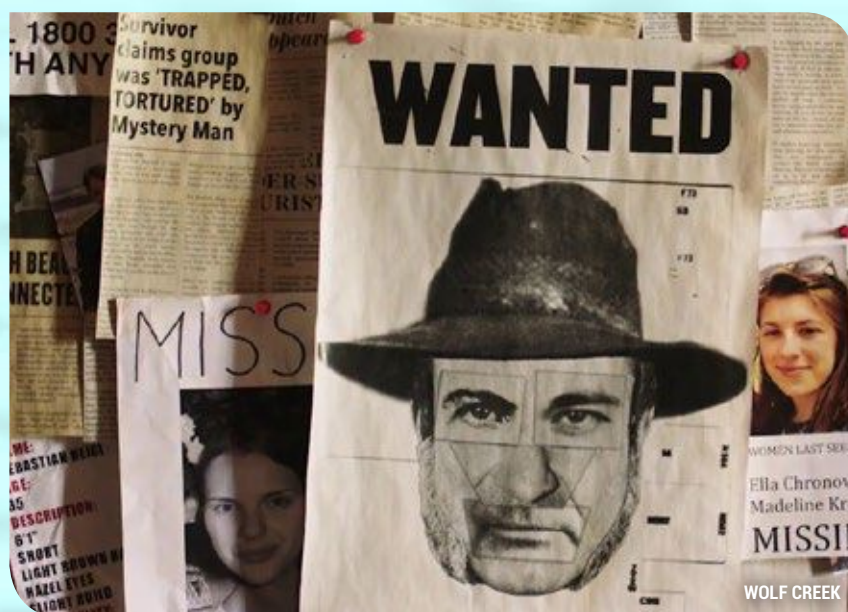
HOWLING MAD

In the final talk of *current* shows, how's about we take a stroll over to **Wolf Creek**. Airing on FOX here in the UK,

this six-episode miniseries has finally arrived to satiate those horror hounds who have been eagerly awaiting more blood to be spilt at the hands of John Jarratt's Mick Taylor. Well, Mick's back, and back in a big, bloody way... for now, at least. For this time around, the tables are being turned on the crazed Aussie, meaning all bets are off on how things play out. Over two movies, we've seen Mick creating chaos and carnage for any who dare venture into the Outback, but the **Wolf Creek** TV series is changing things up and seeing the hunter become the hunted. In case you missed the first episode, which in turn puts the wheels in motion for what's to follow throughout the six-episode affair, Mick Taylor does what Mick Taylor does best: slaughters a bunch of people. Well, a family, to be precise. The only problem is, one of the family, Lucy Fry's Eve, manages to survive the monstrous attack of Taylor. With a plan of revenge in place, Eve changes the game and takes the fight to the despicable Mick. And it has to be said, this miniseries has gotten off to a bloody, brutal start that has caught the attention of many. With **Wolf Creek 2**, it seemed as if we'd seen the end of Mick Taylor, but happily that's not the case. Obviously, so much of the brilliance of the first **Wolf Creek** movie was in the reveal that Mick was actually a crazed murderer, and without any such game-changing moments the sequel just fell a little flat. In the TV series though, it looks as if **Wolf Creek** has found its bite once more.

HEROIC RETURNS

For anyone familiar with my penchant for tights and capes, it would be mightily remiss of me not to give some love to those of a superhero slant in my final **TV Zone** for now. Whilst FOX's **Gotham** is also on the horizon, it's with The CW's DC realm that I'll choose to fill the word count of this column. There's so much to look forward to on this particular front; the Melissa Benoist-starring **Supergirl**



ALSO SCREENING



RED DWARF XI

Grant Naylor (Bob Grant and Doug Naylor) is back for its eleventh series, bringing its familiar crew with it. And to let you in on a little secret, we've actually seen the first episode – as you would have if you joined us at the **STARBURST International Film Festival** last month. Pretty good, right? If I'm honest, I'm still not sure canned laughter or enhanced audience laughter really works these days, but the story, expected performances, and usual **Red Dwarf** charm is still all there and accounted for.

From September 22nd on Dave.

STAR WARS REBELS - S3

Since debuting in 2014, **Star Wars Rebels** has exceeded many people's expectations. Capturing the energy, joy, troubles and battles that make the **Star Wars** franchise so special, **Rebels** has been a true breath of fresh air in how its narrative has delivered whilst taking place in a world that feels every bit the galaxy far, far away that we're accustomed to. In its third season, not only is there more Darth Vader for our ragtag group of heroes to contend with, but Grand Admiral Thrawn, an iconic figure from the Expanded Universe, will be hot on the heels of Ezra and Co. Also see page 46.

From September 24th on Disney XD.

MARVEL'S LUKE CAGE

Mike Colter's Luke Cage first appeared late last year in **Marvel's Jessica Jones**, and this depiction of Power Man instantly pleased many who were wondering how this longtime comic book favourite would come across in Netflix's Marvel world. Much like Charlie Cox's **Daredevil** and Krysten Ritter's **Jessica Jones**, Colter's Cage is perfectly cast and fleshed out in a way that feels so true to his comic book roots. In his own show, Cage will be looking to clean up the Harlem streets that have been corrupted by the likes of Mahershala Ali's Cottonmouth, Theo Rossi's Shades and Alfre Woodard's Mariah Dillard. Not to fear, for Power Man will be joined by Simone Missick as Marvel heroine Misty Knight and Frank Whaley's hard-nosed cop Rafael Scarfe.

From September 30th on Netflix.



SUPERGIRL - SEASON 2

is fully entering The CW's DC world after having her first season over at CBS; Stephen Amell's Oliver Queen is having to juggle the moniker of the Emerald Archer with that of Mayor of Star City in **Arrow**; Grant Gustin's Barry Allen is to undergo all sorts of confusion and changes as the fan-favourite **Flashpoint** comic book arc is adapted for the first half of **The Flash**'s third season; and then there's more time-travelling chicanery ahead for the ever-changing team of **DC's Legends of Tomorrow**. With a four-show crossover confirmed for December – not to mention a bizarre two-episode musical crossover between **Supergirl** and **The Flash** on the way – there's plenty to look forward to for fans of what The CW has put together with their DC output, although, unfortunately, the space in this column is getting less

and less with each passing word.

So that's it, the party is over, the drinks have been chugged, the food has been eaten, the basement has been explored (seriously, *do not* go down there – I'm pretty sure I saw the remnants of Tobey Maguire's career, along with a stack of some worryingly sticky mags), and my time doing my best **Stars in Their Eyes** impression of Paul Mount for **Paul Mount's TV Zone** has come to an end. Sorry about the mess, Mr. Mount, and hopefully the reputation of this fine **STARBURST** staple hasn't been too tarnished. Until the next time, be excellent to each other. +

Contact me via the magic of email at andrew.pollard@starburstmagazine.com or do the Twitter thing @culturedleftpeg.



THE FLASH - SERIES 3

it's only a movie

a column by JORDAN ROYCE



I catch up with the guys behind **GOOD TIDINGS** - SIFF Winner of BEST FEATURE AWARD 2016 (One of these guys is a demented Santa that murders people with a candy cane!)



criticise a previous editor of this mag, but it just didn't feel (to me, at least) like the mag I had grown up with. One that had curated my viewing tastes. I met up with Kris around this time and discussed my concern that **STARBURST** was late with its latest issue. Worse still, it was embroiled in a legal action over monies owed to a paper company, as a result of production debts. This was the peak of a delayed whiplash caused by the banking crisis eighteen months earlier. Retail brands and print publications were dropping like flies. It seemed that **STARBURST** had published its last issue after 34 years. I asked Kris if he would help me. The crazy guy didn't even hesitate. I had my partner in crime. Based on this alone I bought **STARBURST** and took over production. Next step: we had to put the band back together...

I wanted to go back to the glory days of the Dez Skinn era, but sadly, I had no contact details. John Brosnan was sadly departed so I had to step into his rather large shoes (professionally speaking) and take on this column. Tony Crawley had retired, so Kris Heys took over **Things to Come**. I needed to get in touch with Paul Mount to get him back on **TV Zone**, but again, no contact details. I also really needed a horror guru. A few weeks went by and I launched the new starburstmagazine.com website (couldn't believe it didn't have one). On the site, I appealed for new writing talent. Then strange things began to happen...

The first person to sign up was Dez Skinn. *Literally* the first. I emailed him and he accepted the role of honorary Editor-In-Chief. His knowledge proved crucial on our first deadline weekend. Then a few hours later, Paul Mount emailed asking if he could write **TV Zone**. Another hour went by and an email off our current Assistant Editor arrived, describing his encyclopaedic horror knowledge – **Horror Obscura** was born. The first of our new wave of columns. I know it sounds far-fetched but that was exactly how it was. In a matter of hours, everyone came together exactly when they were needed. **STARBURST** was safe, and heading back to the newsstands.

Kris and I also had another profession to learn. In hindsight, I cannot believe how 'mad for it' Kris was. No matter how

"As by magic, the shopkeeper appeared." Anyone old enough to remember **Mr Benn** will get where I am coming from. In this particular instance, **Human Centipede 2** star Lawrence R. Harvey was standing in for the fez-wearing shopkeeper, and the adventure coming to an end was **The STARBURST International Film Festival**. The culmination of a five-year journey for me and the merry band of misfits that I dragged into this. It all began back in the summer of 2008, at a pool hall in Parrs Wood, Manchester.

I was meeting a friend, Helen Lyons-Curran, and we were going to see **The X-Files: I Want to Believe**. She had suggested a friend come along, and I was introduced to one Mr Kristian Heys. We immediately had common ground as we had both bored everyone else to death with our iPhones. We played pool, talked about how amazing

Joss Whedon was, and compared iPhone apps. Our genre knowledge was also very complimentary. I brought the shite sci-fi movies from the 1950s, he delivered on obscure upcoming indie directors.

Two hours with a kiddie-fiddling priest

later, and we had both declared the **X-Files** franchise dead and buried. I sheepishly have to admit we got that one wrong, but the movie was indeed "lame", as I am sure Kris would still contend.

We hung out a lot over the next few years, and often my obsession with owning a cinema or hosting a Film Festival would be discussed. We would also discuss his future as a screenwriter and our passion for independent cinema. Kris was a bloke I just knew would one day be heavily involved in the movie-making business. It just seemed inevitable to me. He had also become someone that I completely trusted. You just didn't meet people like him. He was one of those once in a lifetime sort of friends. The nicest guy I had ever met, yet capable of destroying anyone of an idiotic persuasion in a fit of intellectually-based indignation.

By 2010, I had been running a Leisure Company that owned the **Fab Café** Cult TV and Movie Theme Bars for over a decade. **Fab** would often grab the back page of **STARBURST** for advertising, and I was still an avid reader of the mag, even though it had felt lacking in that contentious spark that had made it an unmissable read in the eighties and nineties. **STARBURST** always used to let its writers off the leash, and the result was magic, regularly engulfing the letters page with arguing and threats, often sparked off by this very column! I would never



Zack the Zombaby is upset that he didn't win anything. He has suggested a Best Zombaby category for next year..

difficult or bizarre, Kris would always be willing to have a go. I was then offered a slot on a local radio station reviewing movies. I suggested we do the **STARBURST Radio Show**. Also that we do it live, and then put it out as a podcast on iTunes. He was bottling it just like me, but he was there with me every step of the way. Amidst the utter chaos of two novice presenters, and constant tech disasters, something just clicked. **STARBURST** was reaching out across a new medium, and believe me, no-one was more surprised than me and Kris that we had loads of listeners.

The first few months were a frantic haze. Kris was managing a new team of writers, and I was suffering from the heavy artistic look that I had imposed on this revamped version of the mag. People could use Photoshop and InDesign, but I was the only experienced graphic designer and was quickly burning out. Then one night, we were invited to a **Star Trek** art exhibition around the corner from our office. Our mate's boyfriend was dressed as a Borg, which attracted grief traversing Chinatown. It was a great bash, and we were introduced to a lovely Vulcan lady, Shauna Askew, who just happened to be an awesome graphic designer, and the rest is history. She joined us just as my head was about to explode, making the mag look even better.

Over the coming months, we made massive progress. **STARBURST** was once again in **WH Smiths**, newsagents, and even on sale in the US. The radio show was going from strength to strength. We had also launched the **Independents Day** column covering emerging indie talent, but it still felt that **STARBURST** needed something to complete the journey. A yearly focal point.

I had been planning to hold our first Film Festival in August 2017, but we were approached by a third party to lend our branding to a film festival that they wanted to launch. There was a slight disagreement. They decided it should be a sci-fi festival. I wanted a festival of cult entertainment, with a massive showcase for indies, culminating in an official **STARBURST Fantasy Awards**. We went our separate ways, but I had already completed the artwork and branding so me and the team thought "why not?"

I would love to say it was easy, but a huge festival with over 60 movies and 30 celebrity guests in a massive tech-savvy venue, involving three floors, two bars, a grand stage, breakout gaming areas, and wrestlers for Shauna – it was seriously hard work. In the final analysis (and I would be honest with you guys if it was a disaster), it delivered the goods. Completing a wild ride that Kris Heys and I embarked upon over five years ago, and best of all – it was chaotically fun.

The mission statement of mixing the future filmmakers with genre fans, **STARBURST** writers, and some of the legends of the profession worked like a charm. Bringing

quite a few people together, including Dez Skinn and Peter Beale, the man who literally greenlit the launching of **STARBURST** using the first official images from **Star Wars**. Seeing them together for the first time since 1977 and knowing the importance of their first meeting made me grin. Peter Beale is a secret titan of the movie industry and it was great that he flew over to tell the real story of how **Star Wars** was made.

The first episode of series 3 of **Inside No.9** was a 4:3 aspect ratio piece of class, and the Q&A with creator/writer Steve Pemberton went down a storm. **Thunderbirds 1965** wowed the crowds. Back in 1986, Eric Saward delivered a scathing attack on Doctor Who showrunner John Nathan Turner in this very mag, and here he was on a panel looking back at that contentious era. My own personal James Bond needs were met by veteran Bond director John Glen. So much talent, and I have not even scratched the surface. All were extremely congenial, and chatted happily to filmmakers and fans alike.

It was also great to hang out with our scintillating writing team. We don't get to be in the same room very often and catch up. It allowed me to point out to Mr Jack Bottomley how generous his review of **Suicide Squad** was. DC has actually made an enjoyable movie by splicing the David Ayer version into the lighter, Trailer Park re-edit. But they have created a Frankenstein movie of tonal variance. I also cannot get my head around this Jimmy Cagney wannabe, cosplaying as the Joker. I like Jack, though...

Despite copious late night sessions, one of which resulted in flooding the Co-op Convenience Store, and numerous complaints to campus security, we actually managed to survive in one piece. I have even had the intricacies of Babestation explained to me, whilst being plied with vodka by a very naughty listener, and then managed to host **STARBURST Radio LIVE** the next day (despite getting lost on the way to the venue and ending up on a basketball court in Hulme). This whole debacle can be found on iTunes, and if anything, I have toned this down somewhat.

Things do indeed have a habit of coming full circle and my friend Helen Lyons-Curran, now an award-winning filmmaker in her own right, joined me on the awards panel, and helped keep judging on track ready for the



Kris Heys (the one with the pint!) returns to STARBURST Radio as we host our very first LIVE Show at the Film Festival

grand finale. The Festival ended on Sunday with Doug Naylor receiving our **Hall of Fame** award for his achievements in television, having earlier introduced the premiere of Episode One of **Red Dwarf XI**. Then Darren Travers bagged **Best Performance** for his lead role in **Don't You Recognise Me?**, a brutal, and gritty movie you need to catch (see page 71). **Amor Fati** won the **Best Short** category, a cautionary tale of relationships. **Naqqash Khalid** hauled away the **Young Filmmaker** award for **Parts**, a slick genre short, with tons of promise. **Good Tidings** was a fabulous horror movie, inflicting three psycho Santas upon a homeless community. An incredible movie that easily bagged **Best Feature**. You need to see this flick or risk being on the naughty list! Then we got to the **Independents Day** Award, where we chose the movie and filmmaker who we felt best represented independent genre cinema. This went to the wonderful '50s sci-fi homage, **This Giant Papier Mache Boulder is Actually Really Heavy**. The brain child of filmmaker and musician Christian Nicolson, who flew in from New Zealand and forward somersaulted onto the stage to grab his coveted Roboto Statuette.

Fast forward to Monday morning, and I was sat in the accommodation living room, waiting for a lift. I looked out of the window and I spotted Lawrence R. Harvey standing across the road on the street corner, looking at his phone. Seconds later, an Uber arrived, and in a moment, he was gone, and it had all ended.

It was the end of a five-year journey that started as a rescue mission, created a family, and ended with a celebration. All that was needed to begin was a friend like Kris.



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